

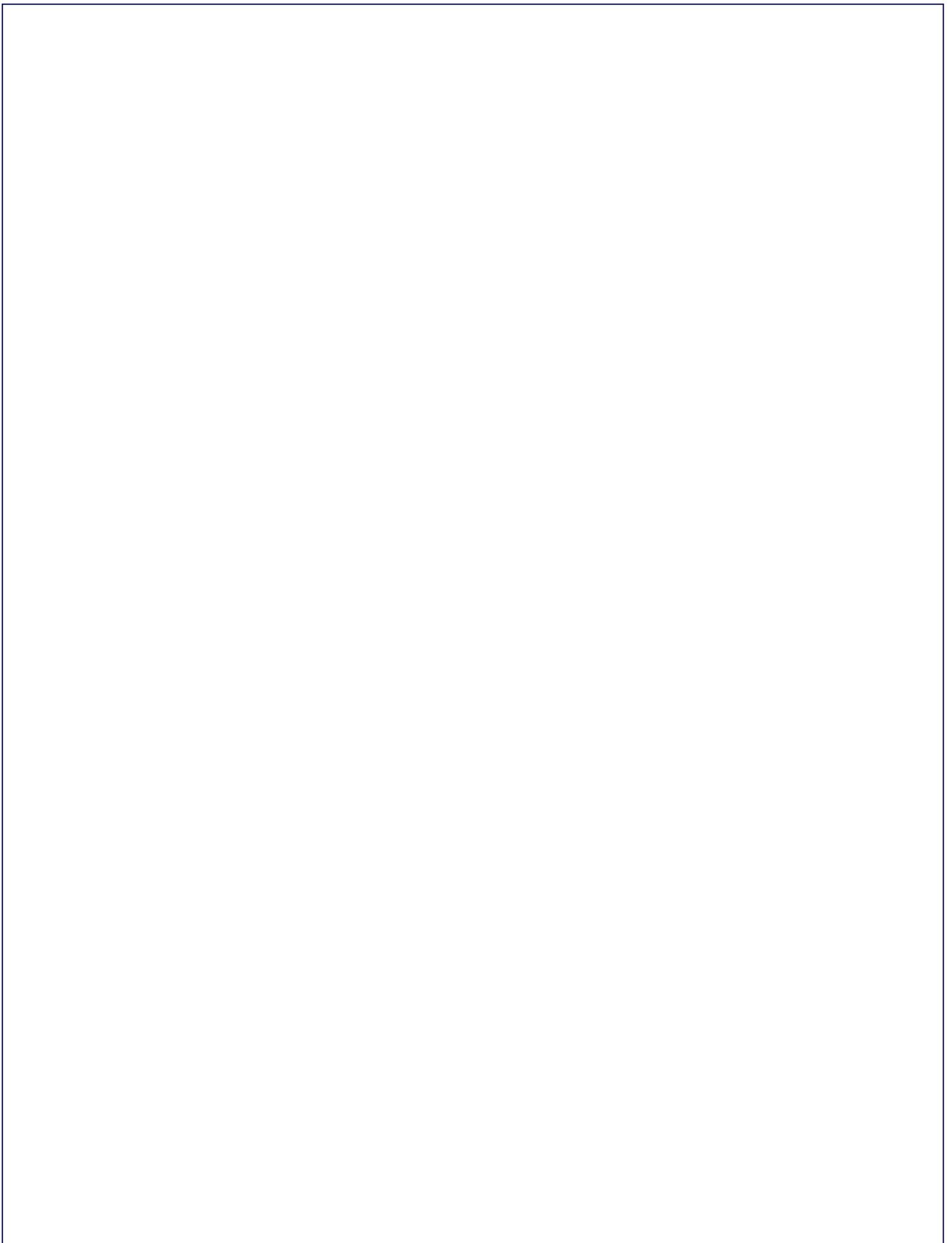
The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Guidelines for Healthy Congregations



Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

- Matthew 28:18-20





The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

The Rt. Rev. Edward J. Konieczny, D.Min.
Bishop of Oklahoma

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My Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The Diocese of Oklahoma supports our congregations in their mission of fulfilling the Great Commission. As one tool for our support, we are pleased to present you with the attached Guidelines for Healthy Congregations.

These guidelines are provided as a way of encouraging congregations in the Diocese of Oklahoma to consider their mission, ministry, and management practices and consider areas for growth. Some of the standards listed are basic requirements, which should be met by all congregations. Other guidelines are provided in the hope that each congregation may find some areas where it is doing very well, and some areas where it could grow and improve. This list of guidelines was created to encourage congregations to consider over time how they are living fully into their life and ministry as a community of faith.

We encourage clergy, staff, vestry, bishop's committee, and other congregational leaders to read these Guidelines and consider how your congregation is following them. While not every congregation is the same, and large and small congregations will have different needs and requirements, we hope that every congregation can find helpful suggestions for development of your ministries here.

We offer these Guidelines with thanks for all those whose input has contributed to their development, and with prayers for each congregation in the Diocese of Oklahoma.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "E. J. Konieczny", written in a cursive style.

The Rt. Rev. Dr. Edward J. Konieczny
Bishop of Oklahoma

The Episcopal Diocese of Oklahoma

Guidelines for Healthy Congregations

The guidelines listed below fall into three categories:

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

All congregations are required to meet these standards. Special permission from the Bishop is needed if a Basic Requirement is not met. Additional expectations are noted as appropriate for parishes, mission congregations, or congregations receiving financial assistance from the diocese. All congregations should strive to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Best Practices for All Congregations

Congregations should work toward meeting these guidelines for best practices in most situations.

Recommendations for Further Growth

Congregations interested in improving their mission and ministries are invited to consider these areas for strategic growth.

If you have questions or would like more information on any of these Guidelines, please contact the following:

General questions, or specific questions about *Area I: Ministry and Discipleship*, please contact the Rev. Canon Susan Brown Snook via email at CanonSusan@epiok.org.

Specific questions about *Area II: Finances, Stewardship, and Facilities*, please contact Canon William Buchanan via email at WBuchanan@epiok.org.

Specific questions about *Area III: Governance, Administration, Safety, and Policies*, please contact the Rev. Canon Dr. Bill Carroll via email at CanonBill@epiok.org.

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Area I: Ministry and Discipleship

1. Clergy and Leadership

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. Clergy are committed to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of The Episcopal Church, and to the framework provided by their ordination vows.
- B. Clergy are persons of prayer, deep faith, and personal integrity who put Jesus and his mission first.
- C. Lay ministers and clergy seek guidance from prayer and the Holy Scriptures.
- D. Clergy collaborate with lay leadership in pursuing the mission of Jesus and equipping the Saints for Baptismal Ministry.
- E. Clergy, staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers who work with children are certified in Safeguarding God's Children training once every four years.
- F. Clergy, staff, ministry leaders, and people who exercise pastoral care ministries (such as Lay Eucharistic Visitors) are certified in Safeguarding God's People training once every five years.
- G. Clergy are certified in anti-racism training at least once, either at seminary or in training provided by the diocese.
- H. In parishes, a compensation review committee conducts an annual review of clergy compensation.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- I. Annual Mutual Ministry Reviews occur as opportunities for clergy and vestry or bishop's committee to reflect on their life and ministry and recommit themselves to the work of the Gospel.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- J. A clearly articulated, widely shared mission statement connects the local congregation to the mission of Jesus in ways that are contextually appropriate to the local community in which the congregation ministers.
- K. An entrepreneurial culture of risk-taking for Jesus and the Gospel is established:
 - Clergy and leaders are involved in the community, considering creative ways to pursue Christ's mission in the local context.
 - Budgets fund visionary initiatives that God calls the congregation to pursue, while meeting standards of fiscal responsibility (see Section 6, page 10).

- The congregation considers and implements styles of worship that are open and inviting to a diversity of people, as well as new styles of education and ministry as appropriate, which are suited to its community or to a new era.
- L. The congregation teaches and uses a Spiritual Gifts Inventory process, which allows congregation members to discover their gifts and calling, and to use them appropriately inside and outside the congregation.
- M. Authority and responsibility for ministry is shared throughout the congregation. Accountability remains with the clergy and vestry/bishop's committee, but decision-making and initiatives occur as near to the action as possible.
- N. 100% of lay members of the congregation are encouraged to actively participate in at least one ministry. 20% participate in at least one leadership role.
- O. The vestry or bishop's committee develops a skills inventory of skills needed on the governing board, and the nominating committee considers these needed skills when nominating new members. Nominations are made after a prayerful discernment process.

2. Congregational Worship and Ministry

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation offers regular Sunday worship each Sunday according to the Book of Common Prayer or other authorized Episcopal worship resource. With limited exceptions (such as Advent Lessons & Carols), Holy Eucharist is offered each Sunday that a priest is available to preside.
- B. The Baptismal Covenant and shared ministry guided by the teaching and example of Jesus is the basic framework for the ministry of all God's People.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- C. If music is a part of Sunday worship, it is designed to be worshipful, beautiful, singable, and appropriate for the liturgical season. Musical choices consider the preferences of people in the congregation, and hymns or worship songs are sung in a way that encourages congregational participation.
- D. The congregation offers pastoral care to its members in times of health and other personal crises, including hospital visits, prayers, and personal support.
- E. The congregation considers formation of children and youth as Christian disciples a core part of its mission, and offers learning, service, and mentoring opportunities for young people (see Section 4, page 6).
- F. The congregation has a prayer team that commits to daily prayer for the church, its leaders, its mission, and its ministries. Personal information shared with the prayer team is kept confidential unless the persons involved authorize it to be shared with others (such as naming people in public worship).

Recommendations for Further Growth

- G. The congregation has a long-term strategic ministry plan, formed out of prayer, study of the surrounding community, and discernment of its own gifts and God's calling, that guides its decisions. The plan is reviewed for progress at monthly vestry meetings and updated annually.
- H. The congregation has an up-to-date ministry handbook that describes each ministry, its leader and contact information, the time commitment involved, and the gifts needed to participate. The ministry handbook is offered to all members and newcomers as encouragement to get involved in ministry.
- I. The congregation has established norms for managing conflict, encouraging healthy communication and deep listening, and teaching people to avoid gossip and other unhelpful behaviors.

- J. The congregation is deeply committed to at least one outreach project that helps people in need outside the congregation, in which members of the congregation actively participate and to which the congregation contributes financially.
- K. The congregation commits at least 10% of its pledge and plate revenue to outreach to help those in need.
- L. The congregation encourages the participation of families in worship and other events by designing them for children's or intergenerational participation, or offering high-quality childcare at all events. Children and youth are never left unsupervised while at the church or off-site church events.
- M. The congregation offers educational programs that promote the promises of our Baptismal Covenant, especially the promises to strive for justice and peace and respect the dignity of every human being.

3. Evangelism and Newcomer Incorporation

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation and leadership have articulated a clear understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, why it matters, and why it matters in their context.
- B. The congregation facilities are clean, well-maintained, and have clear signage inviting people to worship and directing them to entrances, restrooms, children's spaces, and other important areas.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- C. The congregation has considered, and put into practice, ways of inviting non-church members to experience worship.
- D. The congregation has a welcoming ministry that includes friendly greeters and information to give to guests about the congregation.
- E. The congregation has a process for following up with newcomers to welcome them, get to know them, and invite them to return.
- F. The congregation has an intentional practice to pray for community members who would benefit from being a part of the church.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- G. Congregation members have attended the Invite/Welcome/Connect ¹ conference and the congregation has incorporated its ideas into its welcoming process.
- H. The congregation equips its members for the ministry of evangelism, helping them articulate their own stories of faith, and giving them tools to invite others to experience the Christian faith as practiced by the congregation.
- I. The congregation offers newcomer incorporation classes that include information on basic Christian discipleship, Episcopal beliefs and practices, and opportunities to become involved in the life of the congregation.
- J. The congregation commits time and financial resources to communicating and advertising its message to non-members.
- K. The congregation continually considers how its ministries and events can become opportunities to invite non-members to participate.
- L. The congregation has considered ways to become more deeply engaged in the community and to make its name and presence well-known.
- M. The congregation offers some type of event open to the surrounding community at least twice a year that includes a Christian message (such as Blessing of the Animals).

¹ For Invite/Welcome/Connect resources, see www.invitewelcomeconnect.com.

4. Christian Formation

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation offers formation classes to prepare members for life transition rites, such as baptism, confirmation, and marriage.
- B. Diocesan policies on care and supervision of children and youth (see Section 12, page 22) are followed.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- C. The formation of Christian disciples is seen as a core ministry of the congregation. The congregation offers some type of Christian Formation for all age groups to learn about basic discipleship (such as Bible, theology, Episcopal approach to social issues, etc.) on a regular basis. Service and ministry opportunities help people put their learning into practice.
- D. For congregations with attendance above 30 that have regular clergy support, at least one Christian Formation offering is offered each week to help members grow in Christian discipleship. Smaller congregations provide a Christian Formation offering at least once a month.
- E. Teachers and youth leaders take part in diocesan offerings and trainings and encourage their youth to do so as age-appropriate. Teachers and youth leaders take trainings offered from other sources to stay current.
- F. The congregation has a designated person to lead Christian Formation and has supplied that person's name and contact information to the diocese.
- G. Priests offer periodic instructions on preparing for Christian death and burial in accordance with the rubrics on p. 445 of the Book of Common Prayer.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- H. The congregation underscores that Christian education is important for all ages and have considered a scope and sequence of material to be taught so that children, youth, and adults gain a basic knowledge of Bible, Christian beliefs, and an Episcopal approach to worship and social issues.
- I. The congregation utilizes assistance from the Diocesan Office to help review curriculum and other options.
- J. The congregation offers seasonal faith formation programs and events to deepen members' faith at designated times of the year.
- K. The congregation offers Vacation Bible School for its children and children in the surrounding community.



- L. The congregation encourages children and youth to deepen their faith commitment by attending St. Crispin's Summer Camp each summer.

5. Communications

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation has a functioning, updated website or web landing page containing physical address, telephone number, worship times, when childcare is offered (including ages), clergy and staff listings, and Christian formation offerings.
- B. The congregation has internal records of members' names and contact information, and can communicate with all members via mail, telephone, and/or email.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- C. The congregation has an active and updated Facebook page.
- D. Clergy and staff have church-provided email addresses, which are available on the congregation's website.
- E. A printed or online directory is updated with contact information that members have authorized to be shared with other members. If information is shared online, it is shared in a format that is only available to registered and approved members of the congregation.
- F. The congregation offers weekly announcements of church events through its bulletin and/or other communication means (such as email).

Recommendations for Further Growth

- G. The congregation offers periodic in-depth communications to its members and other stakeholders that include spiritual reflections; leadership communications about the vision, mission, and finances of the congregation; and announcements of upcoming events.
- H. The congregation has a clear vision, mission, identity, and brand, which is used in all communications.
- I. The congregation has a rich, vibrant, engaging, and strategic website focused on evangelism and invitation of non-members, with comprehensive content and images for each area of the life of the congregation, service and outreach opportunities, ministry and worship opportunities, and a clear path for visitors and potential members to get connected.
- J. The congregation has an active, updated, vibrant, and strategic presence on numerous social media tools to reach its target audiences (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram).
- K. The congregation's leadership has created a clearly defined Strategic Communications Plan, including a communication audit & situational analysis, strategic communication objectives (3 - 5), goals, tactics, and budget.



- L. The congregation has a clearly articulated crisis communication plan with designated protocols and procedures, including accountability of each role, to respond to media inquiries and to communicate with members in times of crisis.

Area II: Finances, Stewardship, and Facilities

6. Financial Management

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation's leadership ensures that an accounting system is implemented and maintained that tracks financial activity and reports it accurately. Cash is reconciled to bank balances every month.
- B. The congregation's leadership ensures that payroll and mutual ministry support is paid according to diocesan guidelines.
- C. The congregation's leadership ensures that the accounting system adequately accounts for contributions, with separate tracking of designated contributions, and that giving statements are sent to donors who give more than \$250 for the year by January 31st of the following year.
- D. The congregation's leadership ensures the completion of monthly financial statements, which consist of a statement of financial position and a statement of activities.
- E. The vestry or bishop's committee reviews the financial statements monthly and takes appropriate actions to ensure responsible financial management.
- F. The vestry or bishop's committee ensures that the congregation's financial statements are audited annually. The audited financial statements are submitted to the office of the Canon for Finance & Administration by September 1st in the year following the year audited.
 - For congregations that have annual budget expenditures of \$750,000 or more, the audit is performed annually by a certified public accountant.
 - For congregations that have annual budget expenditures between \$500,000 and \$750,000, an external audit is performed at least every three years by a certified public accountant. For years in which an external audit is not performed, an internal audit is performed by an internal audit committee authorized by the Finance Committee, meeting the standards of the diocesan Audit Checklist ².
 - For congregations with annual budget expenditures below \$500,000, an external audit may be performed by a certified public accountant. For years when an external audit is not performed, an internal audit is performed by an internal audit committee authorized by the Finance Committee, meeting the standards of the diocesan Audit Checklist ².

² The *Audit Questionnaire* can be found on the diocesan website (www.epiok.org) under **Resources**, in the **Finance & Administration** section (<http://epiok.org/finance-and-administration>).

- G. If the congregation receives financial support from the diocese, congregational leaders meet annually with the bishop and Canon for Finance and Administration to discuss the congregation's financial status. Proposed budgets for congregations receiving financial support are approved by the diocese.
- H. Any draws from the congregation's endowment are made in accordance with the donor or trust restrictions.
- I. The congregation files a parochial report each year in a timely manner (see Section 7, page 14).

Best Practices for All Congregations

- J. The congregation ensures that an effective internal control system is designed and implemented meeting the following objectives:
 - Adequately safeguard the cash, property, and other assets of the office, including ensuring that people who handle cash, count cash receipts, or reconcile cash accounts are not signers on the same accounts, and that cash receipts are counted by two unrelated persons working together whenever possible;
 - Ensure that deposits of cash and other receipts are made as soon as possible after they are received, and that cash and checks are maintained on site at the congregation's facility in a secure safe until they are deposited;
 - Ensure that all financial transactions are appropriately documented and approved by authorized staff or volunteers;
 - Ensure that funds are expended in accordance with donor requirements and limits;
 - Ensure that financial reporting is accurate, timely and conforms to diocesan policies.
- K. The vestry or bishop's committee has designated more than one authorized signer on all bank and investment accounts, and signature cards are updated each year as people rotate into new positions.
- L. The congregation submits its financial statements to the Canon for Finance and Administration's Office at least quarterly.
- M. The congregation sends year-to-date giving statements to donors on a quarterly basis.
- N. The vestry or bishop's committee has set financial thresholds above which additional approvals are required for expenditures, such as a second signature on checks or finance committee approval before expenditures are committed.

- O. For congregations using a cloud-based accounting system: while some accounting work may be done off-site, source documents (checks, invoices, giving statements, etc.) are maintained at the congregation's facility (or designated off-site storage for older records) rather than taken to an off-site location. Passwords are kept in a secure place and are available for designated leaders in case of incapacity of the main bookkeeper or treasurer.
- P. For congregations not using a cloud-based accounting system: accounting work is done on site at the congregation's facility using a computer and other equipment owned by the congregation. Source documents (checks, invoices, giving statements, etc.) are maintained at the congregation's facility (or designated off-site storage for older records) rather than taken to an off-site location. Passwords are kept in a secure place and are available to designated leaders in case of incapacity of the main bookkeeper or treasurer. Off-site or cloud-based backup is maintained for financial records.
- Q. The vestry or bishop's committee prepares a balanced budget each year for the following year, based on reasonable projections of income and expenses. The budget is presented to the congregation at the annual meeting.
- R. The vestry or bishop's committee ensures that records are maintained and kept of all trust, endowment, and permanent funds showing at least the following:
 - Source and date
 - Terms governing the use of principal and income
 - To whom and how often reports of condition are to be made
 - How the funds are invested
- S. The congregation draws from its endowment (if any) at a responsible rate, generally no more than 5% per year, in accordance with its endowment spending policy and the donor or trust restrictions.
- T. Information about the congregation's finances and financial status is transparent and available to all congregation members in a timely fashion, generally monthly.
- U. The congregation's annual budget includes appropriate budget amounts to cover all routine maintenance and repairs.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- V. The congregation has a finance committee, which:
 - Prepares each year's proposed budget for review and approval by the vestry or bishop's committee

- Does detailed review of financial statements and budget variances each month, and prepares a monthly or quarterly report and recommendations to the vestry or bishop's committee
- Reviews investments, cash balances, endowment draws, and other financial matters, and recommends appropriate actions to the vestry or bishop's committee.
- W. A Certified Public Accountant or other person with significant financial accounting experience acts as treasurer or oversees the financial reporting.
- X. The congregation's annual budget is prepared after soliciting input from all ministry leaders and staff regarding their plans and visions for the upcoming year, and the expenditures necessary to support those plans. The vestry or bishop's committee considers and approves budgets in light of its overall strategic ministry plan and vision for the congregation.
- Y. Staff and ministry leaders have timely information about budgets and expenditures in their areas, so they can make ministry plans in accordance with their remaining budgets.
- Z. The congregation develops a 5-year revenue growth and development projection, considering the age range of givers and giving trends, and reviews its projection on an annual basis to determine how it is progressing. Long-range plans consider the possibility of significant changes in revenues.
- AA. The congregation's budgets include appropriate budget amounts to cover long-term maintenance and unexpected repairs.

7. Information and Reporting

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. Parochial report, with all supporting information, is filed each year in accordance with the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and the diocesan guidelines.
- B. Congregation Personnel and Delegate Report is filed each year in accordance with diocesan guidelines.
- C. The congregation's directory is submitted to the diocesan office each year along with the parochial report in accordance with the diocesan guidelines.
- D. The congregation's by-laws are submitted to the diocesan office when originally created, and updated copies are submitted when changes are made.
- E. The congregation's records are kept in accordance with the diocese's Records Retention Policy ³.

³ The **Records Retention Policy** can be found on the diocesan website (www.epiok.org) under **Resources**, in the **Finance & Administration** section (<http://epiok.org/finance-and-administration>).

8. Stewardship

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation conducts an annual stewardship campaign each year that includes mailing or giving each household a commitment card, with a date by which it is requested to be returned, and a letter that requests commitments as part of members' Christian discipleship.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- B. The congregation teaches that financial stewardship is a basic component of Christian discipleship.
- C. The rector or vicar takes an active part in stewardship, knows the amounts people pledge, is aware of unusual giving patterns that occur during the year, and follows up pastorally with people whose giving patterns change.
- D. The congregation has a stewardship committee that meets regularly to plan, implement, and evaluate an annual stewardship campaign.
- E. The annual stewardship campaign materials include at least a pledge or estimate of giving card, a letter from the rector/vicar, wardens, or stewardship chair, and a hand-out describing the vision for the congregation and the impact that was accomplished in the previous year.
- F. The congregation plans at least one congregational event in relation to its stewardship campaign.
- G. The stewardship committee or vestry/bishop's committee conducts follow-up calls with or letters to members who have not returned pledge cards by the requested date.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- H. The congregation focuses on year-round stewardship as Christian discipleship at all times, not only when the congregation needs to raise funds. Leaders consider supplying bulletin handouts during the annual stewardship campaign that tie Christian giving to the readings and sermons for those Sundays.
- I. The Stewardship committee is developed from a diverse group of leaders within the congregation that excel in areas of fundraising, communications, and special events.
- J. The Stewardship committee maintains files of past materials and resources used to provide insight in future campaigns.

- K. The congregation plans at least two congregational events in relation to its annual stewardship campaign. The events (1) describe the vision of the congregation, provide information, and answer questions, and (2) celebrate the congregation and its successes.
- L. The annual stewardship campaign includes lay witnesses who describe how giving has impacted their own lives and faith journeys.
- M. The congregation has established a planned giving program and a Legacy Society to honor those who have honored the congregation with a planned gift.
- N. The congregation has established an endowment for the church with clear spending policies that are publicly available to the congregation.
- O. The congregation provides a class for its members and the wider community that provides vital tools for a healthy relationship with money.

9. Facilities

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation meets standards for disaster preparedness (see Section 13, page 23).
- B. The congregation ensures that routine maintenance, such as lawn care, changing air filters, and cleaning, occurs on a regular basis.
- C. Leaders of the congregation periodically review the facilities for any safety hazards and provide for repairs or corrections promptly.
- D. The congregation maintains adequate property insurance for the replacement value of the property. The congregation maintains at least the amount of the deductible in its cash accounts.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- E. A binder is maintained with contacts, account numbers, policies, and contracts for all vendors/contractors, to be passed down to each junior warden, property committee chair, or staff member in charge of building maintenance.
- F. The congregation maintains records of who has keys to the building and requests return of keys when people leave the congregation. Locks are changed if there is concern about security regarding someone who has an unreturned key. Leaders consider issuing keys that work on one entrance only, so that only one lock needs to be changed in case of security concerns.
- G. The congregation creates a clear job description for the junior warden or property committee and their roles and responsibilities vis-a-vis any sextons or maintenance staff.
- H. The vestry or bishop's committee conducts regular reviews of insurance to ensure that all property is adequately insured.
- I. The congregation has clear policies for what maintenance tasks are appropriate for congregation members to do on a volunteer basis, and what tasks should be contracted to a paid and licensed professional. Congregation members are encouraged to step forward and take ownership of appropriate volunteer tasks.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- J. On an annual basis, the congregation completes the annual Risk Assessment Form⁴, verifying that all items on the form have been sufficiently addressed.

⁴ The *Risk Assessment Form* can be found on the diocesan website (www.epiok.org) under *Resources*, in the *Finance & Administration* section (<http://epiok.org/finance-and-administration>).

- K. The congregation has prepared full maintenance schedules for all property and equipment, and ensures that the scheduled maintenance occurs and is appropriately budgeted.
- L. The congregation budgets for and takes care of long-term maintenance issues promptly rather than leaving expensive deferred maintenance for the future.
- M. The congregation plans for junior warden, property committee chair, or maintenance staff succession and training.

Area III: Governance, Administration, Safety, and Policies

10. Governance

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation has by-laws that adhere to the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Oklahoma, and the by-laws are followed. The congregation has reviewed the model by-laws ⁵ on the diocesan website and considered any changes that might be necessary to comply with Canons.
- B. The congregation has supplied a current copy of its by-laws and Articles of Incorporation to the diocesan office.
- C. The congregation holds an annual meeting each year by March 31st, electing vestry or bishop's committee members and lay delegates and alternate delegates to diocesan convention; receiving the budget and reports; and conducting other business, as specified in its by-laws.
- D. If the congregation is a mission, the results of the bishop's committee election are transmitted to the Bishop's office, so the people elected can be officially appointed.
- E. If the congregation is a mission or is financially supported by the diocese, bishop's committee members and other congregational leaders attend all diocesan offerings for their ministry (Vestry Academy, Business and Financial Practices Conference, and church growth & development offerings).

Best Practices for All Congregations

- F. By-laws are reviewed in times of clergy transition and periodically at least every three years for conformity with the model by-laws.
- G. If the congregation is a parish, new vestry members attend the diocesan offerings for their ministry (Vestry Academy, Business and Financial Practices Conference, and church growth and development offerings).
- H. The vestry or bishop's committee does not include close family members of clergy, staff, or of other vestry/bishop's committee members.
- I. The vestry or bishop's committee meets monthly to consider the congregation's mission, review financials, and make decisions for the congregation.

⁵ The *Model By-laws* can be found on the diocesan website (www.epiok.org) under *Resources*, in the *For Congregations* section (<http://epiok.org/congregations-vestries>).

Recommendations for Further Growth

- J. Monthly vestry or bishop's committee meetings include prayer, some time for learning or Bible study, and a review of how the congregation is accomplishing its strategic objectives.
- K. Vestry or bishop's committee members commit to pray daily for the church and its leaders; give sacrificially to the mission of the church; attend worship and congregational events regularly; serve in ministry; and invite others from outside the congregation to experience its ministries.
- L. The vestry or bishop's committee holds an annual retreat to discern or review its vision, goals, and strategic directions for the coming year.
- M. The congregation has a process for identifying and equipping future leaders for ministry, including service on the vestry or bishop's committee.
- N. The vestry or bishop's committee has considered how the size of the congregation impacts the role it takes in governance and management, and acts in a way that is appropriate to its size, neither micro-managing nor neglecting important functions.
- O. Vestry, bishop's committee members, and other leaders of the congregation attend diocesan and other offerings designed to help them learn about congregational management, growth and development.

11. Employment Practices

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. The congregation maintains a personnel file for all employees in accordance with the Safeguarding God's Children Policy, which includes:
 - Application
 - References - employment-related and from non-relatives
 - Background Check
 - Training
 - Payroll forms (W-4, I-9, or equivalents for contract labor)
 - Safeguarding certifications
- B. The rector has personally interviewed each employee and documented in the personnel file the fact that the interview happened.
- C. Clergy and lay employees have Oxford background checks and documented reference checks.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- D. Each employee has been given a copy of the Safeguarding God's Children Policy ⁶, the Safeguarding God's People Policy ⁶, the Alcohol Policy ⁶, and the Weapons Policy ⁶.
- E. Each employee (other than the rector/vicar) receives an annual mutual ministry review from his/her immediate supervisor or the rector/vicar (or the senior warden, in the absence of a priest). Written copies of the review are maintained in the employee's file.
- F. Annual Mutual Ministry Reviews for the rector or vicar occur as opportunities for clergy and vestry or bishop's committee to reflect on where they are and recommit themselves to the work of the Gospel.
- G. All employees have job descriptions that explain the scope of their job and the expectations of the congregation and diocese.

⁶ The *Safeguarding God's Children Policy*, *Safeguarding God's People Policy*, *Alcohol Policy*, and *Weapons Policy* can be found on the diocesan website (www.epiok.org) under **Resources**, in the **Policies** section (<http://epiok.org/policies>).

Recommendations for Further Growth

- H. The congregation has an employee handbook that lists policies for vacation, holidays, sick leave, and other employment practices. Each employee has been given a copy of the handbook.

12. Care and Supervision of Children and Youth

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. If childcare is provided, the congregation maintains a space for nursery/childcare that holds a high standard of cleanliness. At least two adults are responsible for the nursery/childcare space when children are present. The nursery contains age-appropriate toys and all toys are sanitized after every use.
- B. Children are released from nursery or childcare only to the parent or guardian.
- C. Nursery and childcare workers have criminal background and reference checks in accordance with diocesan policy and have received Safeguarding God's Children certifications.
- D. Youth (ages 12 and up) have at least two adults serving as leaders, including at least one male and one female. Two adults are present when any person under age 18 is present.
- E. Volunteers who work with children and youth have had criminal background checks and documented reference checks, and are certified in Safeguarding God's Children training every four years.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- F. The congregation maintains a registration list of all infants, children, and youth who are registered for programs, with contact information for parents/guardians and information about allergies and medications. Registration forms are filled out by parents or guardians annually and updated as necessary during the year.
- G. If snacks are offered, staff are aware of all allergies and potential risks.
- H. Infants in nursery/childcare have their diaper bags and bottles labeled.
- I. Registration files for youth (ages 12 and up) are maintained and up-to-date, and include a photo release, consent for excursion for travel, medical forms, and community covenant for each youth.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- J. All nursery, childcare providers, teachers, youth leaders, and ushers are trained in first aid and CPR.

13. Safety Policies and Disaster Preparedness

Basic Requirements for All Congregations

- A. Clergy, staff, ministry leaders, and volunteers who work with children are certified in Safeguarding God's Children training once every four years.
- B. Clergy, staff, ministry leaders, and people who exercise pastoral care ministries (such as Lay Eucharistic Visitors) are certified in Safeguarding God's People training once every five years.
- C. Child care and safety policies listed in the "Care and Supervision of Children and Youth" section (see Section 12) are followed.

Best Practices for All Congregations

- D. If church attendees seem stressed or upset about something, the clergy, a warden, or other designated person is notified. If there is reasonable concern that a person might be a danger to himself / herself or others, law enforcement is notified.
- E. A person is appointed to do a walk-through of the unoccupied portions of the church during worship services.
- F. Crash bars are installed on exterior doors for easy exit in case of emergency.
- G. If bad weather is approaching, a person is appointed to stay weather alert.
- H. The congregation has an evacuation plan in case of emergencies, including planned routes of evacuation for each area of the building, and a designated place for everyone to meet in case of evacuation.

Recommendations for Further Growth

- I. All nursery, childcare providers, teachers, youth leaders, and ushers are trained in first aid and CPR.
- J. The congregation maintains a defibrillator on-site and ushers and others are trained in its use.
- K. The congregation has contacted the local fire and police department to ask them to do a walk-through and make safety recommendations.
- L. The congregation has designated key leaders in case of emergency who are trained in protocols for responding to various situations, including medical emergencies and fires.
- M. The congregation has created a phone or email notification system to contact all members in case of emergency.



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