

Annual Parish Meeting

In the run up to the Annual Parish Meeting each year, I like to joke about how passionately I'm committed to democracy but how tedious I find many of democracy's processes. Democracy seems to require a lot of meetings and I am not a meetings person. I know it's a strange thing for a priest to say, but as many of you know this is not the strangest thing about me.

Meetings are governed by process – Robert's Rules and all that – approving previous minutes, receiving budgets, reports, tabling discussion, and the legalese surrounding motions, seconds, and voting.

It's good to remember Winston Churchill's words on the subject of democracy:

Democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.... speaking in the House of Commons, November 11th, 1947.

The constitutional structure of the Episcopal Church was directly modelled on that of the US Constitution because not surprisingly, except for a smattering of free thinkers and your-run-of-the-mill 18th-century Deists, many of the Founders as members of the newly formed post-Independence Episcopal Church wrote both. Democratic processes might be tedious and time-consuming yet in today's world as if we needed any reminding - the alternatives are too dreadful to contemplate.

Only members of the parish enjoy voting rights at the annual meeting. However, everyone is encouraged to attend to learn about the inner workings of St. Martin's. Membership is, for Episcopal parishes, something of a moving target. It's a good thing to be a baptized Christian, but baptism – while required to be a member of the Episcopal Church, is not a criterion for membership of the parish because you do not have to be an Episcopalian to be a member of St Martin's – paradoxical as that may appear. Remember the Episcopal Church is not a sect for the like-minded, it's the original community church.

There are two main criteria for parish membership.

1. The first is being faithful in worship – i.e., you consider St Martin's your worship home by regularly worshiping with us.
2. The second is being known to the treasurer – meaning do you financially support the work of the parish?

Of course, support is wider than money, it also involves time and talent, but treasure is always a good benchmark for assessing one's level of identification. If we have a record of you as a member – being on the parish roll is also another way of working out if you can vote at the Annual Meeting.

This is all by way of reminding us of the importance of our Annual Meeting and that we hope to see you on Sunday for the 10 o'clock Eucharist – which will be the only service that day to ensure that everyone can move from church to the Great Hall for a special Coffee Hour. We will approve the 2022 meeting minutes, receive the 2023 budget previously agreed by the Vestry, and receive the reports from the various church ministries giving a good overview of the past year's work and achievements. We will also thank outgoing members of the Vestry for their service and elect their replacements along with electing or reconfirming the officers – the Wardens, Treasurer, and Vestry Clerk. I've written an introduction to the Annual Report which can be read [here](#).

At St Martin's in 2022, we continued to work hard at becoming more fit for the purposes that God has for us. We continue to be a community of busy persons where together we can be busy about God.

Let us pray:

O God of unchangeable power and eternal light: Look favorably on your whole Church, that wonderful and sacred mystery; by the effectual working of your providence, carry out in tranquility the plan of salvation; let the whole world see and know that things which were being cast down are being raised up, and things which had grown old are being made new, and that all things are being brought to their perfection by him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen. (Pg. 540 BCP)

See you in church followed by the Annual Meeting this Sunday.

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