

The Role of Parish Council and Warden

Wardens and Parish Councillors play an important role in the mission of our church. They do this by ensuring that our church is effectively administered and governed. This document provides an overview of what the positions of warden and parish councillor involve, and how they are nominated.

What is the focus of the parish council?

A particular focus of the parish council of Vine Church is to ensure that the property, staffing and management systems of the church are growing at the same rate as the growth in ministry. In doing so, they ensure that the church is effectively resourced to continue to grow and bear fruit. In particular, their responsibility includes:

1. Assisting the Lead Pastor in expanding the staff team in:
 - a. being responsive to new needs and opportunities,
 - b. planning ahead for new staffing, and
 - c. recruiting pre-emptively.
2. Expanding and improving the ministry facilities:
 - a. to enable effective current use, and
 - b. to meet the future needs of the church.
3. Ensuring the development of administrative and management systems to ensure the effective operation of the church in:
 - a. Financial management,
 - b. Compliance and risk management,
 - c. Human resource management,
 - d. Fundraising,
 - e. Property management, and
 - f. Property development.

Who is suitable to serve as a warden or parish councillor?

The members of the church should only elect parish councillors and wardens who are godly self-starters, capable of developing and managing the administrative systems of the church in a way that honours god. Each member will be given responsibility for one of the above administrative systems and will be required to report on the health and progress of the system each month at parish council meetings.

General expectations

All parish councillors and wardens are expected to be living out the five purposes of our church by:

- magnifying the greatness of Jesus Christ in all of life (Magnification)
- growing as a fully mature disciple of Jesus by bringing every part of life under His word (Maturity)
- serving others with a glad and joyful heart (Ministry)
- speaking the gospel to friends and family (Mission)
- gathering with God's people and caring deeply for each other (Membership)

Specific expectations

More specifically, this looks like:

- regular participation in a weekly Sunday gathering and Community Group with the expectation to hear God speak and encourage brothers and sisters in Christ,
- cultivating a rich devotional life of regular Bible reading and prayer,
- finding opportunities to speak about Jesus with others and inviting them to church,
- living a life of holiness by repenting of sin, delighting in Christ and disciplining the will in obedience to Jesus,
- setting an example in financial generosity to the rest of the church by:
 - making your financial pledge 2 weeks prior to Commitment Day in November each year,
 - fulfilling your pledge by giving regularly, generously and cheerfully, and
 - making offerings to the Christmas Offering, Missions Offering and other appeals as you are able,
- praying weekly for the lead pastor, parish council, wardens and the church,
- protecting the unity and purity of the church by
 - keeping parish council conversations confidential,
 - engaging in disagreement with understanding and patience, and
 - defending the gospel and godly leaders – especially when it is unpopular to do so and will cost you personally.

How do I nominate someone?

If you are interested in nominating a person to the Parish Council or you would like to offer yourself for this ministry, we recommend you first speak to our Lead Pastor, Toby Neal, to gauge the suitability of this person for the role. Once you have done so, you must make your nomination online two weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting at <https://vinechurch.elvanto.com.au/form/849106df-7255-43f3-a994-c6100c440d0f>

Who should I consider nominating?

There are a number of questions you should ask before you nominate a person:

- Does this person have a deep love for Jesus and are they living a godly life?
- Does this person demonstrate a consistent commitment to church life and ministry?
- Does this person honour God given leadership and do they seek the unity of the church?
- Does this person bring particular gifts, which would benefit the governance and administration of our church?
- Does this person show an ability to see the big picture in complex and changing systems?
- Does this person have the capacity (time and energy) for this role?
- Is this person a self-starter and able to own responsibility without being managed?
- Have I spoken with the existing Parish Council to understand whether this person would be a helpful addition to the team?

Who can nominate someone as parish councillor or warden?

You may nominate a person as a parish councillor or warden if you:

- are a parishioner of Vine Church for a minimum of three months; and
- have regularly attended Sunday services (during 3 months in the past 12 months); and
- declare yourself to be a member of the Anglican Church of Australia; and
- have received verbal or written consent from the person; and
- will be at the general meeting at which the person is to be elected.

Frequently asked questions

What is a warden?

Wardens are officeholders who are responsible for administering the financial and property affairs of the church.

What is a parish councillor?

Parish councillors are members of the governing body for the financial and property affairs of the parish.

What is the time commitment for these roles?

Wardens meet together fortnightly for a one-hour wardens meeting, and come together with the parish councillors on the third Monday evening of each month for a four-hour meeting. Additionally there can be between 1-4 hours of additional duties per week.

What is the composition of the parish council?

The parish council is made up of:

- the minister;
- the wardens of the church;
- 0, 3, 6 or 9 persons elected by the annual general meeting of parishioners of the principal church; and
- one person appointed by the minister for each 3 persons to be elected by the annual general meeting.

Who appoints the wardens and parish council?

Two wardens and 0, 3, 6 or 9 parish councillors are elected each year at the annual general meeting. The minister also appoints one warden at that meeting or shortly afterwards, and has the right to appoint one parish councillor for each 3 councillors elected at the AGM.

Who can be a warden or parish councillor?

You can be a warden or parish councillor if you:

- have been a parishioner of Vine Church for at least three months; and
- have regularly attended Sunday services (during 3 months in the past 12 months); and
- are at least 18 years of age; and
- are baptised; and
- declare yourself to be a member of the Anglican Church of Australia; and
- partake regularly in the Lord's Supper.

However you cannot be a parish councillor if you are:

- bankrupt; or
- a patient or protected person under the Mental Health Act or Protected Estates Act; or
- a prohibited person under the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act.

Three additional criteria apply to wardens:

- the spouse of an ordained person licensed to the parish; or
- an employee paid from the funds of the church or parish; or
- the spouse of a warden in the same parish.

Spouses cannot be wardens of the same church or parish at the same time.

Wardens and parish councillors are required to make the following declaration before or within seven days of being elected:

"I declare that I am a communicant member of the Anglican Church of Australia and am not a prohibited person within the meaning of the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act 1998."

When do you cease being a warden?

You are a warden until your successor is elected or appointed. However you cease being a warden before that time if you:

- die; or
- resign; or
- become bankrupt; or
- become a patient or protected person under the Mental Health Act or Protected Estates Act; or
- become a prohibited person under the Child Protection (Prohibited Employment) Act; or
- fail to make the declaration referred to above before or within seven days of being elected; or

- become an employee who is paid from the funds of the parish or church (for wardens only).

What are the responsibilities of wardens and parish councillors?

The wardens' and parish councillors' main responsibilities are set out in the Parish Administration Ordinance 2008, a copy of which can be found on at www.sds.asn.au. They include:

Wardens

- convening annual and other general meetings of the church or parish in conjunction with the minister;
- ensuring the proper management, security and financial administration of all money and property of the relevant church or parish (with some exceptions);
- ensuring proper procedures are followed for collecting, counting, recording and banking all offertories;
- keeping proper accounting records of all money received and expended by them;
- preparing prescribed financial statements and accounts for the relevant church or parish (and any church or parish organisation), arranging for these to be audited and making copies available for inspection no later than the Sunday before the annual general meeting;
- appointing and removing, with the concurrence of the minister, paid parish workers (lay and student ministers, administrators, cleaners etc);
- paying or providing stipends, allowances and benefits to persons authorised by the parish council to receive them;
- insuring paid parish workers to the extent required by law (e.g., workers compensation);
- ensuring proper care and availability of the things relating to the conduct of public worship services;
- in the case of wardens of a branch church, paying the wardens of the principal church the amount determined by the parish council as the branch church's contribution to parish expenses;
- keeping order in the church building and its grounds;
- ensuring proper repairs and maintenance of the church, rectory, hall(s) and other buildings (including fixtures, fittings and furniture);
- ensuring any property of the church or parish listed on the State Heritage register is maintained to the relevant minimum standards; and
- granting licenses to permit outside persons and groups to use church property (subject to conditions);
- reporting to the annual general meeting of parishioners about the exercise of their functions.

The wardens are also responsible for certain obligations arising from State and Federal laws. These include ensuring the parish's responsibilities are met in relation to:

- employment relations;
- occupational health and safety;
- child protection screening of paid workers;
- and taxation.

Parish Council

- fixing the stipend, allowances and benefits of the minister and (with the minister's consent) the stipend/salary, allowances and benefits of any assistant minister, lay minister, student minister or other lay worker;
- in parishes with more than one church, determining how expenses of the parish are to be apportioned among the churches of the parish;
- conferring with the minister in the initiation, conduct and development of church work and making recommendations on ministry within the parish;
- considering any measure or project that is likely to affect the general interests of the parish and to take proper action on these matters;
- causing minutes to be kept of the parish council's meetings;
- directing the expenditure or investment policy of any of the parish's surplus funds;
- appointing a qualified person to fill any vacancy in the position of auditor of the statements and accounts of the wardens;
- filling casual vacancies which occur among its elected members;
- making donations for patriotic or charitable purposes or for the purposes of a Christian mission society whether local or foreign, Anglican or non-Anglican; and
- doing all things as it can reasonably do to enable the wardens to comply with their responsibilities concerning minimum standards of maintenance for State Heritage listed buildings.

The parish council also has the authority to determine matters of policy, approve budgets and authorise payments in controlling the funds and property of the parish and each church of the parish. It is important to note that the wardens exercise their responsibilities subject to the parish council's authority in these areas. If the parish council decides to exercise its authority in these areas it should not do so in a way which prevents the wardens from properly exercising their responsibilities.

A number of guides and circulars have been produced to

assist wardens in each of these areas of responsibility. Guides on employment relations, parish risk management, child protection and taxation are available on request.

How do the wardens make decisions?

Ideally, the decision-making process will include all three wardens acting unanimously. If one warden is unable to be consulted, or does not agree with the others on a particular issue, a decision may still be made by the remaining two wardens. Similarly the parish council seeks to act unanimously, but at times will vote on decisions.

Can the wardens delegate their duties to others?

Although the wardens are responsible for various functions, they can arrange for other persons to perform some of them on their behalf. In particular, if one of the wardens is not prepared to act as treasurer, they may appoint another person to act as treasurer with the concurrence of the minister. The wardens' ability to delegate the performance of some of their responsibilities is important.

Further information on the matters covered in this document can be found on the Sydney Diocesan Secretariat website at www.sds.asn.au in the 'For Wardens & Parish Councillors' section.