

Vestry/Annual General Meetings

As your parish prepares to hold its annual general meeting online, we have compiled the following information to help you facilitate them effectively.

On April 21, 2020 Government of British Columbia issued the Emergency Program Act to permit British Columbia organizations to hold electronic meetings for as long as public health orders enacted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are in place.

Further, our diocesan council, at its June 25, 2020 meeting voted to revise regulations (6.7.02) related to Canon 6.7 to allow for conducting parish meetings by electronic means. At its December meeting, the council also passed a motion stating that eligibility for Synod 2021 lay delegates would be determined under Article III of the Constitution based on 2019 attendance figures.

PARISH MEETINGS BY ELECTRONIC MEANS

- a. The incumbent of a parish, or, if there is no incumbent, the churchwardens, may direct that at any annual or special meeting of parishioners, or any meeting of the parish council or a committee thereof, a member may participate by means of a telephonic, an electronic or other communication facility that permits all participants to communicate adequately with each other during the meeting. A member so participating in a meeting is deemed for the purposes of the Canons to be present at the meeting.
- b. The incumbent of a parish, or, if there is no incumbent, the churchwardens, may direct that any annual or special meeting of parishioners, or any meeting of the parish council or a committee thereof, shall be held entirely by means of a telephonic, an electronic or other communication facility that permits all participants to communicate adequately with each other during the meeting.
- c. In any meeting of parishioners, the parish council or a committee thereof where members participate by electronic means, those provisions of Regulation 2.1.05 that are not in conflict with this Regulation shall apply, with the necessary grammatical and contextual changes.

[Regulation 6.7.02 adopted by Diocesan Council June 25, 2020]

Vestries are required to meet at least annually to take care of the business of the congregation or parish. Under the diocesan canons a congregation must hold its annual meeting within sixty days of its last financial year end.

CHOOSING A PLATFORM

1. It is important to have a reliable platform. We are recommending [Zoom](#) video conferencing and audio conferencing with the “raise your hand” feature used for voting and anonymous [polling](#) used for conducting elections (note that each voting member must have a device or way to vote). Other options include [GoToMeeting](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#), each of which have polling features. There may be costs associated with using these services. You are encouraged to research which option is best suited to the needs of your parish. Zoom licenses (for meetings up to 30hrs in length with up to 300 participants) have been provided to each parish by the synod office and associated fees have been included in the 2020 diocesan budget. If you have questions about these licenses or wish to purchase additional licenses for your parish (not necessary for conducting your AGM) contact Catherine Pate, cpate@bc.anglican.ca.
2. Prior to the meeting, it is strongly recommended that the parish leadership hold a practice meeting.
3. Accommodation should be made for those who do not have access to a computer device (smart phone, computer or tablet) to call in and vote by phone.
4. AGM organizers should consider if any votes will be contentious and how best to handle them. For example, enlisting two independent people (not currently holding office) to be scrutineers and arrange a method by which the chair can communicate privately with them during the proceedings (e.g. chat message, text message, phone).
5. We recommend that organizers assign a conference call host (not the AGM chair) who would be at the same location as the chair. While the chair will complete the duties normally conducted by a chair, the host will:
 - Manage entrance into the meeting
 - Begin the recording
 - Share on screen documents
 - Initiate and manage voting.

For further guidance regarding meeting format and technical requirements you are encouraged to consult a very helpful resource called [Virtual AGMs: Yes, you can!](#) produced by the Ontario Nonprofit Network.

NOTIFYING PARISHIONERS

Notice of the annual meeting of vestry or a special meeting of vestry must be given during pre-recorded worship that are broadcast or live stream worship on the two preceding Sundays. In addition, notice should be communicated to all parishioners through a combination of email (using blind copy or third-party mailing software so privacy laws are not breached), phone calls, text messages and postings on the parish website. The incumbent and churchwardens shall attempt to reach all parishioners individually using all reasonable means available. A written record must be maintained of the steps taken to reach each person on the vestry list. Where contact is acknowledged by a member of vestry, a record must be kept of that acknowledgement.

The vestry list should be made available upon request, at least two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting.

ATTENDANCE

1. Allow significant time at the beginning of your meeting to establish quorum, using the “waiting room” feature to allow the scrutineers or recording secretary time to note attendance as people enter the meeting.
2. A member is present at a meeting if the member establishes a communication link to or votes at the meeting.

RECORDING THE MEETING

1. If organizers intend to record the meeting, an announcement should be made as part of the notice of meeting and at the beginning of the AGM that:
 - i. the meeting will be recorded
 - ii. that the recording will be kept confidentially
 - iii. where the recording will be stored and for how longIf organizers anticipate that a recording may cause concern they can:
 - i. forego recording
 - ii. hold a vote on whether it will be recorded
2. A report of poll results must be downloaded, and unidentifiable results made available to parishioners by request.
3. As usual, a record of the meeting (minutes) including a list of participants will need to be kept.

Following the meeting, please submit copies of the parish annual report, Parish Information Return (PIR) and the 2021 AGM minutes by **March 12** and the Parish Financial Return (PFR) no later than **March 31** to the synod office synod@bc.anglican.ca.

NEED HELP?

If you need help with technology please contact the Catherine Pate, cpate@bc.anglican.ca or your regional dean. For other AGM-related inquiries please contact Barry Foster, bfoster@bc.anglican.ca.