

St. Mary of the Hills Episcopal Church

Blowing Rock, North Carolina

Vestry Covenant

Recognizing Holy Scripture as the authority that should govern our behavior and relationships with one another and with the congregation, and acknowledging Paul's directive to Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12) concerning his role as church leader to be "an example to the believers in speech, life, love, faith and purity", we agree to the following covenant, subject to review and revision, as needed:

I. We will support one another by:

- Praying for the parish, clergy, and fellow Vestry members daily.
- Submitting reports or other documents for meetings to the chair, the Rector or Senior Warden (in Rector's absence), by the Friday prior to each month's meeting. All documents for business will be uploaded to our Vestry folder on Google Drive.
- Arriving at each meeting on time and prepared to engage in our common work. Inform the Rector if you are unable to attend or will arrive late to a meeting.
- Using a modified version of Robert's Rules of Order in Vestry meetings.
- Using "I" statements to reflect ownership of our ideas and opinions.
- Respecting each other's opinions.
- Being willing to both listen and speak up at Vestry meetings.
- Directing comments/questions toward the chair and/or the member leading an agenda item.
- Striving toward consensus.
- Supporting decisions agreed upon by the Vestry.
- Committing to bring unresolved issues/divergent opinions back to Vestry meetings for further discussion.
- Practicing confidentiality.
- Agreeing to be time-sensitive during discussions at Vestry meetings.
- Honoring any member's call for prayer and/or silence during Vestry meetings.
- Limiting Vestry meetings to 90 minutes in duration. At 90 minutes, the Vestry will decide to either continue meeting for a determined amount of time or adjourn after scheduling an additional meeting time.
- Using email selectively and with discernment, ensuring all Vestry members and clergy are included.
 - As a general practice, business before the Vestry should be discussed during meetings rather than by e-mail. We will avoid 'holding meetings in the parking lot' of e-mail.
 - Votes will not be taken by e-mail, except in matters of urgency. ('Urgency' is determined by the unanimous decision of the Rector and Wardens.)

II. We will be an example to the congregation by:

- Nurturing our own spiritual lives by faithful and regular attendance in worship, engaging in practices and study that nurture spiritual growth, and giving sacrificially to the mission and ministry of the Church.
- Creating a positive environment where all can voice their own thoughts.
- Warmly welcoming parishioners to attend Vestry meetings.
- Beginning and concluding Vestry meetings with prayer.
- Bringing comments & suggestions on behalf of identified/named parishioners only.
- Agreeing not to act on behalf of anonymous critics.
- Ensuring that the minutes of Vestry meetings are as transparent as possible and posting the minutes of Vestry meetings on the parish web site, once approved, with the exception of:
 - Rare confidential portions of meetings.
 - Personal testimony by Vestry members.