# Parish Priest letter of agreement

*between*

**The Wardens and Vestry of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Episcopal Church, in**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (location: town, village, city), the Bishop/Ecclesiastical**

**Authority of the Diocese of Central New York, and the Rev. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,**

who has agreed to serve as Parish Priest with the understanding that this tenure shall be for \_\_\_\_\_\_ months, beginning on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, unless earlier dissolved by mutual consent, or upon 60 days’ notice by either party, subject in any case to the approval of the Bishop. The Parish Priest shall lead \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Episcopal Church as pastor, priest, and teacher, sharing in the councils of this congregation and of the whole Church, in communion with our Bishop. By word and example, informed at all times by the Holy Scriptures, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Constitution and Canons of the General Convention and our Diocese, the Priest shall proclaim the Gospel, love and serve Christ's people, nourish them, and strengthen them to glorify God in this life and the life to come.

## Vestry Responsibilities

All ministries other than those reserved to ordained leadership (such as administering the sacraments) are understood as mutual ministries of the laity of the congregation and the Parish Priest. The Vestry shall lead the laity to support and cooperate with the priest in pursuit of the congregation’s goals.

The Vestry is the legal agent for the congregation in all matters concerning its corporate property and in its relationship with the Parish Priest. When there is not a priest who is “in-charge” of a congregation, the vestry has oversight of the mission, ministry, and business of the congregation and will work in collaboration with the Parish Priest to set mutually agreeable goals. The Vestry will see that the priest is properly supported, personally and organizationally, as well as in the Vestry's financial obligation to the priest.

**The Vestry will:**

* supervise all congregational staff, in consultation with the Parish Priest, in the exercise of their responsibilities and ministries;
* be the legal agent for the parish in all matters concerning its corporate property and in its relationship with the Parish Priest;
* coordinate pastoral care in consultation with the Parish Priest;
* provide lay readers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers, acolytes, choir, and organist to assist the clergy during worship services;
* support programs of the parish such as Christian education, youth group, altar guild, ECW, stewardship, and district involvement;
* in consultation with the Parish Priest, prepare for and lead the Vestry and Annual Meetings;
* maintain fiscal records and perform administrative duties; consult the Parish Priest for guidance should there be a need to clarify these duties;
* provide opportunities for feedback to the priest.

## Parish Priest Responsibilities

The Parish Priest represents and extends the ministry which is the Bishop's pastoral and canonical responsibility for congregations.

The Parish Priest will:

* work with the Vestry and other lay leaders to maintain the regular schedule of worship services and preaching;
* have full authority and responsibility for the conduct of the worship and the spiritual jurisdiction of the parish, subject to the rubrics of the *Book of Common Prayer*, the Constitution and Canons of this Church, and the pastoral direction of the Bishop;
* in consultation with the Senior Warden, respond pastorally to any emergencies;
* in consultation with the Senior Warden, offer marriage preparation and officiate at services of marriages and funerals; with the understanding that marriages and funerals require additional time of the priest, it is recommended that the wardens and priest review the attached time and compensation recommendation for this additional time;
* offer guidance and consultation to the Vestry;
* at the request of the warden(s)/vestry, offer training to members of the laity for various parish responsibilities (i.e. Eucharistic Visitors, lay worship leaders, stewardship programs, education/formation opportunities).

## Parish Priest Times of Work and Leave

The Parish Priests’ scheduled work will be:

* presiding and preaching at Sunday Eucharist for \_\_\_\_(number) Sundays per month ;
* presiding and preaching during the services of Holy Week and Easter.
* In addition to presiding and preaching, an additional \_\_\_\_\_ hours per week will be spent working with the parish on the defined goals and objectives of parish.
* As may be requested by the Vestry, attend vestry meetings, to consult and advise in the decision making process.
* Offer marriage preparation and officiate at services of marriages and also at funerals. With the understanding that marriages and funerals require additional time of the priest, it is recommended that the wardens and priest review the time and compensation recommendation for this additional time.
* Be available to the parish for special functions, trainings, and discernment process to be determined in consultation with the Senior Warden and/or Vestry.

## Parish Priest Compensation

The Parish Priest will be paid a cash stipend of $\_\_\_\_\_\_ per month, which includes the agreed upon number of worship services/month. If the vestry negotiates additional hours per week, the priest will submit a timesheet to the senior warden and will be reimbursed at the hourly rate of $55 per hour. Travel expense for the use of the priest’s private automobile for church business is to be reimbursed at the rate per mile (the current IRS allowable amount) plus out-of-pocket expenses such as parking, tolls, etc. Travel reimbursement is paid as a reimbursement expense to the parish and the priest will submit a Travel Report to receive reimbursement.

All pay will become effective on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date) and the first paycheck will be paid on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (date). (Note: NYS Labor Law suggests a semi-monthly payment basis to be paid on the 15th and final day of the month. Wages should not be paid in advance and payment should be made after the priest has worked for two weeks.)

Church Pension Fund: A priest who is not retired and is expected to be regularly employed for five or more consecutive months by the same employer, must be covered by the Church Pension Fund. A parish is required to pay pension assessment based on the cash stipend paid per month at 18% of the total amount paid. If a priest is retired, no pension payment is required.

Clergy in the Diocese of Central New York are entitled to the following periods of leave at full compensation:

1. Federal Holidays, to be taken so as not to interfere with worship for major occasions.
2. Annual Vacation of four weeks, including five Sundays. Vacation time shall not be cumulative and may not be carried forward into a succeeding year, unless by previous arrangement under extenuating circumstances, as arranged with and approved by the Wardens.
3. Professional Development Leave at the rate of two weeks per year, including one Sunday.
4. Clergy Sick Leave Policy – If illness or injury inhibits the rector’s performance or causes the rector to be absent on a Sunday morning, a warden shall be notified. The wardens are to be dually concerned with the clergy’s and parish’s health. If repeated or chronic absence of the priest becomes a factor in the life of the parish, then the clergy, a warden or both shall notify the Bishop.

## Work Environment

A reasonable work environment will be provided to the priest, with all expenses paid by the parish and will include: telephone service to church office, office equipment, furniture, supplies and provisions for maintenance of office space as well as staff services (secretarial and janitorial as appropriate), internet service, postage, and additional personnel as needed.

## Discretionary Fund

In accordance with the canons of the General Convention, the Alms/Discretionary Fund, in the absence of a Rector, is under the control of the Congregation’s Almoner. The Senior Warden shall be appointed Congregation’s Almoner, and, together with the Parish Priest and Junior Warden, shall have access to this fund for the aid of the poor and those in need, and for any other reasonable expenses normally attributed to such a canonical Alms/Discretionary Fund.

## Use of Buildings

It is understood that the general pattern of building use followed by past practice of the clergy and vestry shall be maintained, unless there is specific action of the Vestry to the contrary. The Vestry will have the right to grant use of the buildings to individuals or groups from outside the parish, under guidelines approved by the Vestry. The guidelines should be documented and readily accessible by any member of the congregation.

## Other Agreements

This Letter of Agreement shall be made part of the minutes of the next Vestry Meeting following its signing, and copies shall be given to each new Vestry member thereafter.

If the Parish Priest and Vestry are in disagreement concerning the interpretation of this Letter of Agreement, either party may appeal for mediation by a mutually agreed upon third party, the Bishop being the final arbiter.

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Date Parish Priest

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please print name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date Warden

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please print name

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date Warden

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please print name

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Transition/Deployment Officer Date

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Bishop Date