

# **St. Philips Episcopal Church**

## **Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest**

*Adopted by the Vestry of St Philip's Episcopal Church 10/21/25*

### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the integrity and faithful stewardship of all decisions made by the Vestry, ministry boards and committees, and related Vestry, Board or Committee membership bodies of St Philip's. As a church, we are called to model Christlike conduct, which includes acting with honesty, fairness, and accountability. This policy establishes ethical expectations and clear procedures to address conflicts of interest.

### **II. Scope**

This policy applies to all members of the Vestry, ministry boards and committees, and any other governing or advisory bodies of St Philip's.

### **III. Ethical Principles**

1. **Faithful Stewardship** – Vestry, Board and Committee members shall exercise their responsibilities as trustees of the Church's mission and resources, serving the interests of the congregation and the wider community.
2. **Integrity and Transparency** – Vestry, Board and Committee members shall conduct all business openly, honestly, and in a manner consistent with the values of the Church.
3. **Avoidance of Impropriety** – Vestry, Board and Committee members shall avoid actions or relationships that create, or create the appearance of, conflicts between personal interests and the interests of the Church.

### **IV. Conflicts of Interest**

A *conflict of interest* exists when a Vestry, Board or Committee member's personal, financial, professional, or relational interests could compromise, or reasonably appear to compromise, their ability to act solely in the best interests of the Church. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Financial benefit to oneself, family members, or business associates through Church decisions.
- Personal relationships influencing hiring, contracting, or grant decisions.
- Serving on boards or organizations that may compete with or influence the Church's ministries.

### **V. Disclosure**

Upon learning of a conflict of interest, an individual should cease any interaction and discussion on the subject activity, whether prior to or during a Vestry, Board or Committee meeting. The individual should:

1. Disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest at the earliest opportunity to the Sr. Warden, Board or Committee Chairperson.
2. Verbally communicate to the Vestry, Board or Committee members at the regular meeting and prior to any discussion on the subject for which the conflict exists. The conflict is to be recorded in the meeting minutes.

## **VI. Recusal vs. Abstention**

- **Recusal:** Recusal means stepping aside entirely from discussion and voting so that influence, whether intentional or not, is removed from the decision-making process.
- **Abstention:** Abstention means refraining from voting but continuing to engage in discussion. Abstention does not adequately address a conflict of interest. In addition, abstention in voting will be recorded as a vote in favor of the motion on the floor.
- **Policy Requirement:** In cases of conflict, *recusal is required*. Abstention is not sufficient.

## **VII. Procedure for Recusal**

1. The Vestry, Board or Committee member shall declare their conflict and state that they are asking to be recused.
2. The Vestry, Board or Committee Chair shall make a motion to recuse the individual, followed by a second, and subsequent vote on the motion.
3. Recusal does not have to be requested by the individual to be recused. If a majority of members of the Vestry, Board or Committee believe a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, exists, then any member of the Vestry, Board or Committee can make such motion, and a vote will be taken.
4. The Board or Committee member shall physically step out of the meeting during discussion and voting.
5. The minutes shall record:
  - The nature of the conflict,
  - That recusal occurred, and
  - That the Vestry, Board or Committee member was absent during deliberation and vote.

## **VIII. Accountability**

1. If a Vestry, Board or Committee member fails to disclose or appropriately recuse themselves, the Vestry may take corrective action, which may include censure or removal from their position in accordance with Church canons and bylaws.
2. The Rector and Wardens, in consultation with the Chancellor (if applicable), shall provide guidance when questions of conflict arise.

## **IX. Commitment to Ethical Vestry, Board or Committee membership**

All Vestry, Board or Committee members of St Philip's affirm their commitment to this policy and to upholding the highest standards of integrity in service to God's mission. The congregation's trust depends on our collective commitment to act without favoritism, hidden interest, or undue influence.