

On Local Custom

Despite numerous attempts over the centuries ranging from Papal edict and Acts of Uniformity, to liturgical customaries, there has never been one universal liturgical standard.

While this course may suggest certain ways to plan and present liturgy, the wishes of your Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, who has canonical responsibility for the parish liturgy, and the local custom of your parish, always take precedence.

Any deviation from the parish custom is clearly under the direction of your Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge.

It is often spiritually rewarding to experience different types of liturgy and varied liturgical styles. This helps to broaden our understanding of the wide variety of worship experiences seen throughout the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Communion. Your clergy and parish leaders should lead any efforts in this regard. As a trained member of the worship team, your input will be beneficial, especially as you continue to grow in experience as a verger and as a member of the parish liturgical team. Your role will be essential in making sure any such efforts are carried out with grace, reverence and attention to detail. Always keep in mind that the priest in charge of your congregation is the one responsible for the conduct of liturgy and your role is to support that individual.

Parish Dynamics and Ministry Relationships

As you prepare to immerse yourself in this training course, it might be a good time to talk about parish dynamics and the verger's relationship to the other ministries in your congregation.

First and foremost, your Rector, Vicar, or Priest in Charge is always in charge. No matter how close your personal friendship and working relationship to your clergy, never forget that when you both gather, your role is that of a servant and your priest is the boss.

Your relationship with other worship ministries will develop over time. If you are in a congregation with an established verger ministry, many of those relationships may already be established. If you are just beginning a verger ministry at your congregation, remember to tread lightly. Always keep in mind as a verger you are on the lookout to make sure everything is ready for worship but it is not your responsibility to do everything. Your Altar Guild may have the responsibility to preset the linens and communion vessels. Perhaps you notice the frontal is the wrong color or you need an additional chalice. It is not your job to tear the altar down and replace the frontal or rummage in the fine silver closet to find an additional chalice. It *is* your job to note what needs to be done, bring it to the attention of the altar guild person assigned for the day/service and offer to be of assistance. This holds true with ushers, greeters, sound and lighting technicians, etc. Some of these may be assigned to you by your Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge. If not, find the person whose ministry it is and let them do their ministry.

