

## *From Fr. Don:*

**S**tructure is typically not that interesting to folks and why I find it exciting might leave folks to wonder. This I know: if a church vestry or congregation does not understand the unusual structure of the Episcopal Church, they may have difficulty down the road.

When discussing the structure of the church please consider the image of a balanced scale, not too much weight on either side of the fulcrum. The desire is that balance recognizing that under certain circumstances the weight may go too far on one side or the other. Further, unknown issues, personalities and of course the 7 deadly words "we've never done it that way before" might cause the scales to tilt.

Here are a few points, and I will continue with this next week:

1. Episcopal parishes are not independent. The individual parish owns its building and property "in trust" to the Diocese to which it is assigned. It cannot sell its building or property, or mortgage its property without the permission of the Bishop and the Standing Committee or Diocesan Council (basically the vestry of the Diocese).

2. While the Vestry elects a Rector (or Priest-in-Charge) the Bishop has the final authority to approve them and call them to the parish. The Vestry cannot independently terminate the Rector either. That process includes the Bishop as well.

3. The Vestry has total charge over the financial and physical concerns of the parish. The Rector has total charge over the staff (employment), music and worship, and has duties assigned by the canons of the church.

4. Generally, the Rector has no vote at Vestry meetings, however the Rector presides and the Vestry cannot meet without the Rector's presence or permission.

5. The Rector has the right to use the building and furniture and he/she has access to all books and records of the parish.

6. While the Vestry and Rector collaborate keeping those scales balanced, one does not "out-rank" the other. The Vestry does not supervise or employ the Rector nor can the Rector toss-out vestry members.

More next week... The structure of our church, and the structure of our nation were created by some of the same folks with the same hope that we best serve when we best agree.

*Fr. Don+*

*Any topics for our Adult Education in July??*