

## Fish Award Criteria 2017

The following are some things to consider while pondering the Fish Awards:

1. A good parish history will appeal to the congregation involved, providing them with a narrative into which they can place themselves and utilize as they move forward. It will also serve as a source of personal and collective memory, though not an uncritical one.
2. An even better parish history will do all of the things mentioned in (1), but will also provide some analysis and interpretation that will render it of more than local interest.
3. This can be accomplished in part by providing context—situating the life of the parish in the broader contexts of community, diocesan, and even national historical movements. The advice or participation of professionally trained historians will be an advantage here, but will also make it more difficult to compare fairly with the work of those without such training.
4. It should definitely demonstrate awareness of broader issues in the life of TEC, such as churchmanship, controversies over church issues (BCP revision, women's and gay marriage/ordination) as well as broader social issues with which the parish and the larger Church have had inevitably to deal if their history stretches back far enough (Independence, abolitionism, various wars, temperance, women's and gay rights, the Civil Rights movement, *et al.*).
5. A particularly good history should draw on a variety of sources (as available). Vestry minutes—which, when merely summarized, can evoke a large yawn from the reader—should be supplemented by oral history interviews, material culture, photographs, the physical plant, art works, and any other sources that might contribute a fuller understanding of the texture—physical, cultural, social, spiritual—of the life of the parish.
6. The format and physical appearance of the final product are considerations even though here, as in other ways, financial resources may tip the scale in favor of a more professionally executed volume.
7. In brief, a parish history should be more than a chronicle of vestry decisions supplemented by a list of rectors. These are the skeleton of a history, but need to be folded into an appealing and enlightening narrative supplemented by photographs, tables, and other supplementary/complementary material.