



# *The Vergers' Voice*

*The Vergers' Voice  
in the Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church*

*"Service through Worship + Worship through Service"*

## 15th Annual Conference in Lexington, Kentucky—An Event to Remember

Described by VGEC President David Jette as a memorable gathering of vergers, the Fifteenth Annual VGEC Conference September 18-21, 2003, in Lexington, Kentucky, was hosted by the Church of the Good Shepherd and Christ Church Cathedral and was attended by vergers from the United States and Canada.

Included among the activities were Choral Evensong services at each of the host churches, workshops, and visits to thoroughbred horse farms, the Keeneland Race Track, a local distillery, and the Shaker Village in nearby Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. On Thursday evening, attendees enjoyed a reception at the City Center Condos and then were treated to a reception and dinner on Friday evening at the home of the Very Reverend Morris Thompson, Dean of Christ Church Cathedral.

The Guild conducted its annual business meeting on Saturday. Included among the business was the election of Walter Stuart as treasurer and Dianne Betts as secretary. Chapter representatives gave reports to the conference and President David Jette delivered his state-of-the-guild address (which is printed on page 4 of this issue). The conference concluded on Sunday with all vergers processing at the 11 o'clock Holy Eucharist at Christ Church Cathedral.

The vergers and spouses of Christ Church and Church of the Good Shepherd performed a masterful job in planning and putting on this conference. The Guild appreciates all of the efforts that made this such an enjoyable occasion.



Vergers view thoroughbreds at horse farm  
near Lexington, Kentucky

**Epiphany Issue  
January, 2004**

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## *2004 Membership Information for Vergers*

From Dianne Betts, VGEC Secretary:

Renewal notices are being mailed a little earlier this year and the deadline has been moved to January 31, 2004. This is to help us get the updated Membership Directory out in a timely fashion. Dues have remained the same. Remember to notify the Guild if you change addresses, churches, phone numbers, or email addresses. Remember also to include your priest(s) if you have a group membership

## *Upcoming Events*

### **Walter Mace Chapter Second Annual Vergers Conference**

The Walter Mace Chapter of the VGEC (Diocese of Texas) is sponsoring its second annual Vergers Seminar on March 20, 2004, at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Houston, Texas. Featured speakers will be the Reverend Dr. Bob Wells and the Reverend Dr. Robert Moore. Dr. Wells will be speaking on spirituality and listening as it relates to vergers while Dr. Moore will focus on the Concordat and the Lutheran and Episcopal prayerbooks. There will also be workshops on the various aspects of the ministry of verging. The cost of the seminar is \$40 if paid by March 1 or \$45 after that date. A continental breakfast and lunch will be included in the registration fee. Participants will also receive a manual containing approximately 60 pages of great information. For more information on this important event, contact Ann Goza (713-465-7553) or Peggy Metcalf (713-741-4312) or visit the Walter Mace website at [www.texasvergers.org](http://www.texasvergers.org).

### **Sixteenth Annual VGEC Conference**

Mark your calendars! Join the Vergers at Saint Michael & All Angels as they celebrate the Feast of their Patronal Saint. The Sixteenth Annual Conference of the Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church will be held in Dallas, Texas September 23 – 26, 2004. Conference hotel will be the Park Cities Hilton in Dallas. Plans are being made to share Texas barbecue and hospitality as we gather for learning, sharing, worship, and fun. Brochures will be mailed in late spring with more details. We look forward to seeing a large crowd of vergers and friends!



## Dianne Betts—New VGEC Secretary



*Dianne Betts*

At the business meeting of the 15th Annual Conference, Dianne Betts was elected Secretary of the VGEC. She offers this bit of biographical insight:

“The Episcopal Church has long been an important part of my life. I am a cradle Episcopalian who grew up at Christ Episcopal Church in Tyler, Texas. In 1993 I moved to Dallas and to Saint Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church. I have always been active in parish life. At Christ Church I sang in the choir and held offices in the EYC, the Women of the Church, and St. Theresa’s Guild. Since moving to Saint Michael and All Angels, I have served on the Building Committee, the Parish Committee on Vocations, the Parish Council, the Worship Committee, the Music Committee, the Vestry, and as Eucharist Coordinator of the Women of Saint Michael.

“Liturgically, I serve as a lay reader, acolyte, chalice bearer, and vergers, and am a former master of ceremonies. In the Diocese of Dallas, I am currently a delegate to the Diocesan Convention and am a Diocesan Delegate to the Provincial Synod. In the secular world I hold graduate degrees in both economics and history. I work as an advisor for a regional brokerage firm where I serve on the Private Client Group Advisory Committee. I have taught Microeconomics, Money and Capital Markets, Financial Economics and Portfolio Management, and both European and American Economic History and remain on the Adjunct Faculty at Southern Methodist University. During my university teaching days, I authored two books and numerous articles. My late husband, Floyd, and I have two children and six grandchildren.”

The Guild appreciates Dianne’s willingness to assume this vital position.

## Another View of General Convention

*By Bid Drake*

Going to General Convention for four days was a wonderful experience! I stayed with a vergers friend, and was privileged to be put to work at the Minneapolis Convention Center. My friend was scheduled to be a chalice bearer at the noon service on Friday, so I tagged along and offered to help. The coordinator immediately gave me an ID tag, and I served with the “purple table” group.

There were nearly a dozen color-coded tables scattered around the auditorium, all set up the same way. One person dispensed supplies, two deacons administered the Host, and four chalice bearers stood waiting. The bread was torn from a loaf, we used glass chalices, and very nice disposable purificators, each stamped with a gold cross. My alb was in the car just in case, but we all wore street clothes for that service.

Saturday afternoon we met with Sandy Webb, Intern Assistant to the Executive Officer, to rehearse for the big service Sunday morning. There were four vergers: Dennis Christian and Jeanne Hicks from St. Mark’s Cathedral, Minneapolis, Ford Royer from St. James in Minneapolis, and me from St. James, Conroe. Since Dennis was the tallest, he served as Bishop’s Vergers, and led close to 200 bishops up the center aisle; Jeanne verged the 97 LEM’s in albs up a side aisle, and Ford verged more than 200 UTO representatives for the UTO Gathering up the other side. Ford assigned me to the altar party because I am a member of the VGEC and have a VGEC seal on my chimere. So I followed the bishops and verged the crucifer, four torches, the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, the Bishop of Minnesota, the Archbishop of Nigeria, and five more clergy.

The processions were accompanied gloriously by a fifty- member bell choir, and by continuously popping flashbulbs. There also was a 200- member choir, made up from choirs in Minnesota parishes, with an orchestra and a brass band, and the music was splendid. A joyful sound was indeed sent up! All of us vergers assisted the UTO ladies up the ramp to present their contributions to the PB at offertory time, and down the stairs at the other side of the stage. Puerto Rico, our newest diocese, was represented, and my friend Elaine McClurkin from St. Andrew’s, Bryan, presented the Diocese of Texas offering. The assemblage of more than 5,000 people received communion at approximately fifty stations around the edges of the convention hall, and did so in just 20 minutes. It was an incredible blessing, to be able to participate in such a spiritual and uplifting service!

## *President's Message*

David Jette



Let me begin my message to you by thanking Nick Phillips of Iuka, Mississippi for assuming the responsibility for editing, producing and mailing our publication, *The Vergers' Voice*. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this undertaking and I commend his work and ask that you make every effort to keep his mailbox full of interesting verger news.

I have on many occasions shared with you my deep conviction that the most important work we do in our churches and cathedrals is done outside the view of worshipers. In our role as leaders and organizers of worship we know that we can best pastor and direct when we are not conspicuous. A verger friend of mine said to me recently, "A verger is only as good as the task he or she is not noticed performing." I firmly believe this posture will more greatly warm the hearts of our rectors and bishops than whether we are always the center of attention using our verges to command and cajole.

Our membership is now 454 strong, an amazing growth record for an organization as young as ours. This alone is a great tribute to vergers everywhere. Our guild of vergers continues to attract those new to this ministry as well as those long committed to this service.

The General Convention of the Episcopal Church, this past year was graced by the service of verger Ford Royer of St. James' Church, Minneapolis. What a wonderful tribute to our departed brother Barry Bowman who served so well at the last General Convention in Denver, that the ministry of verger is now part of the fabric at the highest levels of our church organization.

The Church is of course more than our ministry as vergers. No one can escape the currents running through our branch of Christ's Holy Catholic Church. The election, confirmation and consecration of the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, a cause of celebration for many, has yet left some in bitter anguish for our church. Some have threatened to leave, to withhold funds and many have gathered for well publicized strategy sessions. Our usually quiet V-list has been ablaze with hundreds of messages from both sides of the issue. Many of you have contributed your thoughts or offered advice and counsel to those angered and hurt. For the most part the civility that partly defines our church, has been exhibited in our exchanges and I hope this level of demeanor will continue in all our deliberations. Let us continue to hold each other in our prayers as the church continues to struggle and debate issues of human sexuality and our place in the Anglican Communion.

Where can vergers lead today in the parishes and cathedrals they are called to serve? I like to see my job at Trinity Church in New York as front line ministry, not carried out from behind a desk but lived out in the sanctuary, the aisles of the nave, at the front door and on the street.

Here is my charge to you. Help in any way you can to make our worship more comprehensible to the newcomer. Work to re-design our orders of service to perhaps include more of the texts of our worship with simple and easy to understand rubrics that really assist the worshiper. Encourage ushers and greeters to attend to those who appear a bit confused and uncertain. Make sure the literature table is well stocked and tidy. Provide a place for visitors to sign a register and perhaps pick up information about your church and who to contact for more detail. Then go back and send a postcard or note to anyone who has left an address. And for God's sake make clear to your vestries and rectors that a locked door on Wednesday does not send a welcome message to someone who might want to return on Sunday. Organize a volunteer corps to serve as greeters, docents or guides so that our beautiful church buildings can be open seven days a week. And take time for prayer. Pray with other vergers, pray with your acolytes, pray for that curate who just cannot learn to walk properly in a procession and lastly pray when alone. Pray for the gift of charity, that you may be a better agent of God's love and give thanks that God gives you the grace to do more than you can ask or imagine.

God bless you.

David Jette  
President,  
Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church



***An Epiphany Reflection***  
by The Reverend Dr. Peter Gustin  
VGEC Chaplain

Okay, so by now the Christmas Madness is over. The last tiny junior acolyte's nose has been wiped, the last Altar Guild crisis has been averted, the last Head Usher has been mollified, the last uppity junior clergy has been sucked-up to and placated (OH so undeservedly... Is there no JUSTICE in the Church!), and we think we're finished for a while. Maybe like the Christmas Goose, we're finally done. Thank God for Epiphany, where nothing really happens until more madness starts on Ash Wednesday and Lent, where everyone complains about everything all over again.

Um, nothing happens in Epiphany? Whoops. Only those of you who have met me and heard my voice (not a verger's voice, I'm sorry to say) can imagine the sound of this:

***In your dreams, Bucko!***

Sorry, dudes and dudettes, it doesn't end with Epiphany, it *starts* with Epiphany. Christmas was all about gathering around the manger and trying to incorporate everyone's wildly variant ideas about what that gathering should look and sound and feel like. It was verger-as-ringmaster/mistress (although a ringmistress with a whip conjures up images that might best be avoided), trying to incorporate three rings of activities and expectations into a single, unified liturgy. The best you can do at this point is take off your top hat and put your whip away.

Epiphany (once you make the Three Kings Pageant disappear) is not about spectacle, it's about a deeply personal and individual encounter with God-Incarnate, with the Word-Made-Flesh dwelling among us. It's about a single shepherd and a single King/Wise Person recognizing Something Very Important in the manger. If they did it, we can do it. It's about recognizing the Face of God in the everyday. And haven't we all seen that recognizing Face of God in the everyday is a whole lot harder than juggling and organizing and planning and placating?

The problem of Epiphany is that it comes down to us and our ministries: do we see the Face of God in that junior acolyte with the runny nose? Do we see the Face of God in the Altar Guild person who is telling us that "this simply can't (and won't!) be done?" Do we see the Face of God in that snively Head Usher who is going behind our back to sabotage the very ministry we are trying so faithfully to cultivate in this congregation? Hardest of all, I know, do we see the Face of God in those impossible clergy who change their minds without telling us, who give conflicting directions to different groups of people, and who will do anything to ensure their own popularity in no-win situations?

Epiphany is not a season of liturgical largesse, which is good news for us. Not too many spectacles in Epiphany. It is, however, a season of encountering, recognizing, and responding to the Human Face of God everywhere we look. This can be far more difficult than running the three-ring circuses of Christmas and Easter. If we see and embrace the Face of God during Epiphany, we will receive from It the strength we need for the rest of the year. If we refuse to see It, our failures will compound as we move farther and farther from the One Who called us to this ministry.

Epiphany is for me the hardest season of the year. Give me the spectacles of Christmas and Easter; give me the desolation of Lent; give me even the "long, green season of Pentecost," where my duties are focused on others. But please take from me Epiphany, where it's all about my own recognition of God right in front of my face.

## ***Secretary's Report on the 15th Annual VGEC Business Meeting At Christ Church, Lexington, Kentucky***

By Roy Harvey

Verger, Church of Our Saviour, Jacksonville, FL



The Fifteenth Full Membership Meeting was my last as Secretary to the Guild. My two terms as Secretary have been exciting and rewarding. It will be nice again to sit among the quorum during meetings and not having to worry about last minute changes to agendas for the executive committee and/or the full membership. One of the more apostolic things I remember doing as Guild Secretary was going to Kinko's at 5:30 in the morning to have information ready for a meeting. You know it can get quite cold in Kansas, at the end of October, for a southern boy like me! I wish my successor much success in her tenure and look forward to a smooth transition. Also, there will now be more time for me to spend in the hospitality suite!

Guild President, David Jette, opened the meeting with prayer. There were 54 in attendance for the meeting. Special guest, Fr. George Price, Rector of St. Gregory's in Boca Raton, FL was welcomed and introduced to the group.

Membership Secretary, Dianne Betts, reported that we have 428 members paid to date. There were 12 chapter reports from various groups throughout North America.

The 2004 conference is scheduled for September 23 – 26 at St. Michaels and All Angels in Dallas, TX. Dianne Betts will be the Conference Host Chair. The 2005 conference is scheduled for University of the South, Sewanee, TN. Margaret McLarty, St. Andrew's Cathedral, Jackson, MS will be the Conference Host Chair.

The Nominating Committee recommended Walter Stuart, St. Gregory's, Boca Raton, FL, for the office of Treasurer and Dianne Betts, St. Michaels and All Angels, Dallas, TX, for the office of Secretary. There were no nominations from the floor. The motion was seconded and approved for both Walter and Dianne.

The 2004 Conference will see the election of a new president. Bill White, Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis, IN, Margaret Clements, Trinity Cathedral, Miami, FL, Lloyd Graham, St. Marks, Tampa, FL, Vince Jang, True Sunshine Church, San Francisco, CA, and Wynne Porter, Guild Vice-president, Christ Church Cathedral, Indianapolis IN will be the members of The Nominating Committee for Guild President in 2004. March 31, 2004 will be the cut off date for nominations for 2004. Anyone with any nominations should contact one of the committee members. The meeting concluded with the Guild President's Perspective of the past year.

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## Bishop Alard dies at 62

by Bidwell Drake

The Right Reverend Leopoldo Jesus Alard, Bishop Suffragan of the Diocese of Texas and VGEC Chaplain, died October 16<sup>th</sup> after more than a year of multiple health problems. At the time of his death, Bishop Alard was waiting for a liver transplant. His funeral was held on Saturday morning, the 25<sup>th</sup> of October at Christ Church Cathedral, Houston, and his ashes are to be interred at St. John the Divine Episcopal Church, Houston, which was his home parish after his health forced him to step down from his duties as Bishop. He is survived by his father, wife Aida, and 15-year-old daughter Rebecca.

Bishop Alard, born in Cuba and educated in the States and Puerto Rico, served parishes in Florida before he came to Texas as executive director of the Center for Hispanic Ministries. He was elected Bishop Suffragan in 1995, and was well-beloved in the diocese by all who knew him. Bishop Leo served on many committees and boards in Texas and nationally, and was a powerful and moving preacher.



## Editor's Note

### “Housekeeping Details”

After agreeing to serve as editor of this publication, I had planned to have an issue in print before Christmas. Alas, such was not to be the case owing to a number of circumstances that were beyond anyone's control. It is the plan to publish six additional issues in 2004 on a roughly bimonthly schedule. Below is listed the projected publication dates along with recommended deadlines on which to submit material. Please remember that when space is limited, notices of upcoming events may bump other news to a subsequent issue.

In order for proper attribution be made on submitted material, please identify the author with a “by line.” Otherwise, it will be assumed that no such acknowledgment is expected. In either event, editorial responsibility may require me to make revisions occasionally. These will generally be limited to meeting space constraints and maintaining consistency in style.

### A Personal Note--

For my 40th birthday, my wife gave me a Waterman “Opera” fountain pen. It was the perfect present for a fancier of fine writing instruments, and I have lovingly used it for the past dozen (or so) years. As I have reflected on what is expected of me as editor of *The Verger's Voice*, the Waterman has come to mind several times, not because it bears **any** similarity to computers and the complexities (for a “fifty something” lawyer) of desktop publishing. My Waterman pen represents for me the wonder and the power of good communication. This Guild has grown from an idea to an effective and grace-bearing organization because of good communication. Through the dedication of the previous editors, this newsletter has contributed to that effort. I am honored to be a part of that tradition.

Just as the ministry of verging has evolved through the years to meet the changing needs of the church, *The Verger's Voice* must continue to evolve in order to support the verger's ministry. I ask you to be a part of that process by offering suggestions, requests, and comments. And please remember: in order for us to have a *newsletter*, I will continue to need news to share, so please keep me informed on happenings, whether they be conferences or installations.

The faith that has brought us to this ministry must be communicated, whether with our lips, our computer, or our pen. May we continue to be about this mission “with gladness and singleness of heart.”

### Projected 2004 Publication Schedule for *The Verger's Voice*

Issue	Deadline for Submitting Articles	Date of Publication
Lent	February 15, 2004	March 1, 2004
Easter	April 10, 2004	April 25, 2004
Pentecost	June 10, 2004	June 25, 2004
Transfiguration	July 15, 2004	August 1, 2004
St. Michael & All Angels	October 1, 2004	October 20, 2004
Advent	November 15, 2004	December 10, 2004

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