



The Verger's Voice

in the Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church

"Service in Worship + Worship through Service"

Lay Ministry in Action

Recently, the experiences of two lay ministers were poignantly recounted on the "V-List," the email exchange sponsored by the VGEC. Those two emails are reprinted here with appreciation for the ministries of Mike Malone, VGEC Webmaster and Verger at Holy Cross, Poplar Bluff, Missouri, and Janine Tinklenberg, Lay Reader, St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Redford, Michigan:

From Mike Malone: "A few weeks ago, a parishioner died. He was a man who was very well liked in the community and in the church. He was the very first instructor ever hired at the local community college. He'd been a member of the vestry, and despite the (many) disagreements I've had with the vestry, and with Richard himself, we always joked and made each other laugh.

"I was asked to plan the funeral service, and I did my best, right down to doing a service booklet with the full text of the service in it, since many of those attending would not be Episcopalians. I arranged for the organist. When I showed up at the church, the funeral director looked positively relieved that there was someone there to take charge. I worked with him and we got all arranged. I verged the service, leading the casket in and out -- it was the least I could do.

"A few days after the funeral, I received what may have been the nicest thank you note I have ever received, from Richard's widow. It made me a bit self-conscious, because she actually called me a saint. Now, regardless of the Biblical definition, I hardly regard myself as a saint. But that thank-you card made me realize how much we touch those around us, simply by doing our jobs. It made me really feel that what I do is a *ministry*.

"A few weeks later, I assisted with a wedding. The groom was a long-time church member, and the bride was relatively new to the Episcopal Church (she was confirmed this May). It was a second marriage for both of them. The rector and I met with them ahead of time, and went through the entire service, explaining what had to be done by rubric, and what options there were. While we were going through what they had to do, the bride looked at me and said, "But you'll be up there, right?" I assured her that I would be there to help them get anywhere they needed to be. I ended up verging them down the aisle, and to and from their seats. They seemed positively relieved to have someone helping them.

"I didn't do anything for Richard, or for John and Sandy that I wouldn't have done for anyone else buried from or married in the church. I consider it part of my job as verger. But to relieve someone of the stress of having to plan a funeral or a wedding alone -- can be a ministry that can touch lives.

**St. Mary the
Virgin Issue, 2004**

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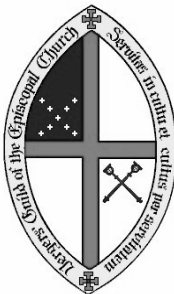
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VGEC Conference: The Numbers

- 23** The date in September when the 16th Annual VGEC Conference begins in Dallas, Texas. The conference concludes on Sunday, September 26.
- 2** The number of featured speakers at the conference: Tony Briggie, Verger and Acolyte Master, who will be speaking on the recruiting and training of acolytes, and Dr. Louis Weil, seminary professor and noted author, who will lead a workshop on the Liturgy of Holy Week.
- 13** The number of years *Dallas*, the popular television series appeared. The Conference Awards Dinner will be held at Southfork, home of "J.R. Ewing" of *Dallas*.
- 175** The registration fee (in dollars!) for attending the conference.
- 15** The projected number of persons to be recognized at the conference for having completed the VGEC course.
- 1/4197** The ratio of vergers per square mile in Texas. Let's improve this ratio for one weekend in September, 2004. Make your plans to attend the 16th Annual VGEC Conference, hosted by St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, Dallas, Texas.

Contact Dianne Betts,
Dianne@vergers.org, or Priscilla
Owen, 8011 Douglas at Colgate, Dal-
las, TX 75225.





Verger Profile: John Taylor

POSITION/CHURCH/SIZE: I am the Head Verger at St. Mary's Kerrisdale Anglican Church in Vancouver, BC, Canada. St. Mary's is the second largest parish in the Diocese of New Westminster, one of 4 dioceses in the province of British Columbia. St. Mary's has 750 families on the parish role and conducts 3 Sunday services, including the 8 a.m. service from the Book of Common Prayer, the contemporary service from the Book of Alternative services at 9:15 a.m. and an 11:15 service which alternates between two rites in the Book of Alternative services. Two mid-week services of Holy Eucharist are also conducted. St. Mary's has 3 assistant vergers.

YEARS AS A VERGER: I have just celebrated my tenth year as a verger at St. Mary's Kerrisdale. I have worked under two rectors and 6 associate priests. I live in the Verger's Suite at the church.

FAMILY: I have a 21 year daughter from a former marriage who lives and works in Simi Valley California and my furry companion, Mitzicat.

HOBBIES: I am an avid squash player, playing an average of 4 – 5 matches per week. I also am a 10 km and half marathon runner. I also enjoy weight training. I read and collect stamps and coins.

FAVORITE QUOTE: I have a collection of quotes and one day hope to publish them. To pick one is difficult. So here are two of my favorites: "The greatest thing you'll ever learn is to just love and be loved in return" Moulin Rouge

"If the Beloved is everywhere, the lover is a veil, but when living becomes the Friend, lovers disappear."

Rumi

"Life should not be a journey to the grave with the intention of arriving safely in a beautiful and well preserved body, but rather to skid in broadside, thoroughly used up, totally worn out and proudly proclaiming, "Wow! What a ride!" Unknown author

RECENT BOOKS READ: Fiction: *The DeVinci Code*; Non Fiction: *The Essential Rumi*, A Collection of Ecstatic Poetry from the 13th Century Sufi Mystic Jelalludin Rumi

REASON FOR BECOMING A VERGER: Being a Verger is my full time paid ministry. I believe I was called by God to engage in this ministry because of the serendipitous way the opportunity was presented to me. I am a "cradle" Anglican and I was very active in the choir, acted as head server and president of AYPAs in my home parish of St. George's, in Guelph Ontario. With my knowledge of liturgy, my broad base of career experiences and the support of clergy and parishioners, I have continued to develop the role of verger here at St. Mary's. I also act as Master of Ceremonies and Acolyte Master.

MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE AS A VERGER: Hosting the 12th Annual VGEC Convention in Vancouver and being able to share the beauty and excitement of Vancouver with so many wonderful people. Being able to repair the Primate of Canada, Archbishop Michael Peir's crosier 3 minutes prior to the start of a procession.

ADVICE TO A NEW VERGER: View your calling as a ministry and lead with your heart and soul with lots of love and compassion.

More Directory Errata

Change of Address:

Joanne Denise Salisbury (formerly Forster)
6707 El Monte
Prairie Village, KS 66208

William Philip Farmer
3911 Kenesaw Drive
Lexington, KY 40515-1102

Bidwell Drake – new email address
bdrake2939@consolidated.net

Allison Elizabeth Keck
26 Trillium Center
Cashiers, NC 28717

Susan Colleen Beall, Dr.P.H. (name correction)

New Members:

Charles M. Bundesen.....954-427-8521
3100 NE 48 Ct. #101 pamandchuckb@aol.com
Lighthouse Point, FL 35064
St. Nicholas', Pompano Beach, Diocese of SE Florida

Cozette R. Ledford.....770-667-7702
905 Summer Wind Place ocl@bellsouth.net
Roswell, GA 30075
St. Aiden's, Alpharetta, Diocese of Atlanta

Linda M. Odgers.....972-296-3142
1035 Florence Dr. lindamo1941@msn.com
Duncanville, TX 75116
St. Paul's, Dallas, Diocese of Dallas

Hackett, Mr. Gregory James.....336-973-8638
6790 Vannoy Rd.
McGrady, NC 28619
St. Paul's, Wilesboro, Diocese of Western North Carolina

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"I'm not a person who often has the right words for the important moments in life. In general, things like that leave me speechless. Maybe that's why I'm not a priest. But I have found that people don't need words so much at those times. They need things done for them. My knowledge of the liturgy can be just what people need for those very stressful times, whether they are mourning or rejoicing.

You don't have to *say* anything. Just *do*. Do what needs to be done. What you do when someone is in need of your services as verger is so much more important than any words you can come up with."

Janine Tinklenberg's Response: "Mike, that's a nice thing to hear. A few weeks ago I did my first funeral. Actually, DID it. A parishioner's husband had died and since we don't have a priest, she asked if I could do the service. According to the BCP I can do burial services as a lay reader. I offered the name of our former rector, but she insisted that I should do it. So I did.

"I made a nice bulletin. It was at the funeral home, which made it more nerve-wracking. Here I was, in front of people who do this all the time. I had told the widow that I had never done this before and her answer was, "Well, we'll break you in good then." It went pretty well, considering. There were more people there than planned, so they had to run off more bulletins on the copy machine. The man doing the eulogy didn't show up in time and had to do it at the end. I kept the service pretty short, but in accordance with the rubric in the prayer book. And I put the responses in the bulletin, so everyone could follow them.

"I also ended up doing the committal at the mausoleum, which I wasn't thinking I would do. Since the people there did not know the responses, I simply said them myself. I'm glad I was able to help in this way, but it's not something I ever thought I would have to do!"

May we give thanks for the lives and ministries of Mike Malone and Janine Tinklenberg.

A Day in the Life of John G. Campbell, Dean's Verger, Lincoln Cathedral, UK

How long have you got? One of the great blessings of being a verger in the Church of England and in particular Dean's Verger of Lincoln Cathedral, is that no two days, weeks, hours are the same. The varied job description runs from the janitorial to the genteel, dealing with those from castle, cottage and caravan. Kings and commoners, princes and paupers all come our way and it is a privilege to serve them.



Today, June 9, 2004, has been a typical non typical day. Entering the Cathedral at 0630 I had to negotiate a "gentleman of the road" (and his dog) sleeping in the staff entrance to the Cathedral so the first job of the day was to make him a cup of tea and acquiesce to his request for a couple of candles to give him some light through the night.

By 0915 we had prepared the Cathedral for a service for Her Majesties High Court Judge who had come to sit in Lincoln; the congregation gathered, mayors and council chairmen, Commanding Officers from the three of the Royal Air Force Air Bases in the county, solicitors, magistrates, school children and members of the general public. The procession formed up at the west end of the Cathedral; the mayoral party of the City of Lincoln (donned on bear skin scarlet and ruff), the city recorder, circuit judges, under sheriff, Her majesties High Sheriff, the Subdean and Dean of Lincoln, the High Court Judge and the Chief Constable. Of course with a liberal dotting of vergers here and there just to guide them on the way. Fanfares from the trumpets heralded the arrival the organ strikes up the National Anthem and off we go in procession to the delights of the early tourists - what a photo shoot!

The pomp of the 0915 over we then welcome 550 children who will spend the day with us as part of our Church Schools Festival (which lasts for ten days with 400 to 600 eight year olds each day) who will take part in dance, drama, singing, wood and stone carving and even vestment making (to be worn by the Bishop at an act of worship at 1330). This year we have a WOOOFYT (Wooden one octave organ for young technicians) which is built and played twice a day by twenty of the children used in the act of worship!

A preparation meeting, with the Diocesan Tourism Officer, for a service later in the month is fitted in before meeting with the Cathedral Safety Officer to look at a Fire Training Seminar we are leading four times next week. The Fire Training meeting goes on a little too long and I have to keep a representative of the BBC waiting for twenty minutes.

The BBC producer is very patient and we spent an hour talking about filming in the Cathedral, putting a programme together for BBC2, one of a series called "God's Architect." (Filming starts in the summer so hopefully it will be out early 2005. Through my column, I will update you on this.)

Evening prayer at 1715 (the 6th service of the day) is said, not sung, tonight and is taking place in the retro-choir, so here I sit telling this story while my colleague prepares for the 0800 mass tomorrow morning. As the clock strikes 1745, I make my way home (20 yards) for supper, then at 1900 I will leave again to give a talk to a local Women's Institute. Hopefully I will be home by 2130 for a gin and tonic!

I would not change it for the world.

John G. Campbell
Dean's Verger, Lincoln Cathedral



President's Message

by David Jette

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

A scriptural theme over the past two Sundays recalls a message of Advent. "You must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Accordingly on Friday, August 6 we celebrated the great feast of the Transfiguration, commemorating a revelatory event in the life of our Lord. Each of the synoptic Gospels describes this event in great detail. However Luke's record (the one assigned on that day) uniquely describes Peter, James and John as "weighed down with sleep." One can understand our inability to adequately prepare for the coming of Jesus in our lives but for Jesus' inner circle to be snoozing during our Lord's Transfiguration seems astonishing. How can this be? As I was walking toward the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Times Square to attend an early evening sung Eucharist recently, I was confronted with a phalanx of people clogging the streets from the 42nd Street subway stop to the church's location on 46th Street. Literally thousands of people were taking advantage of the host of offerings this small part of New York offers, each obviously enjoying the excitement of the moment. One question continues to haunt me: were the 75 or so people attending the Eucharist any more alert to the coming of the Lord than the thousands gathered just outside the church door? Are we, as representatives of the faithful, prepared for God's presence among us? It strikes me that these are good questions for vergers to ponder.

Vergers almost by nature and certainly by calling must be alert to so many things. We are not asked to remain idly by when more acolytes are needed or when an altar guild member needs the paschal candle stick moved. In many ways we are the "Marthas" of worship. While the congregation is attending to prayer and meditation we are probably engaged in performing items from a check list. However, we all know that the mere state of being busy does not guarantee attentiveness. By the same token sitting quietly alone does not assure being awake to the promptings of the Spirit. Our vocation as vergers requires attention to detail and vigilance while at the same time maintaining a vision of the bigger picture. If our worship is a means toward an encounter with God in Christ, our participation in making liturgy happen is a response to the reality of God in our lives in the present.

Recently as my summer get away, I visited with a friend, Glacier National Park in northwest Montana which is connected with Waterton Lakes National Park in southern Alberta, Canada. This magnificent Rocky Mountain setting is dotted with hanging valleys, glacial lakes and the last remaining glaciers in the lower 48 States. A highlight of the trip was hiking the twenty mile round trip "garden wall trail" along the continental divide. The first mile of the hike follows the divide along a narrow passage with a wall of stone on the right and a similar narrow ledge overlooking a second ledge thousands of feet below on the left. How insignificant one seems in the midst of such stunning grandeur. Here was the big picture solid and inescapable. While some hikers were busily snapping pictures, I put the camera away and marveled at this incredible scene knowing that I could never forget it. Vergers need experiences like this. Sometimes we get so caught up with the details of worship we neglect to pause and reflect on the sheer awesomeness of God. As Christians, we have been blessed in knowing the power of God best expressed in the person of Jesus who came among us as one who serves. The servant ministry of Jesus is the source of our work as vergers and ultimately guides us to the place where we may encounter God in all God's redeeming work.

David Jette
President



A Reflection on the Feast of St. Mary the Virgin

by The Reverend Dr. Peter Gustin
VGEC Chaplain

Deadlines are funny things. Sometimes the distance between the deadline (what we, in the documentation business call the “drop-dead date”) and the actual dissemination of the information is quite expansive. Sometimes, particularly in Holy Mother Church, situations change radically between the deadline and the publication; but sin being what it is, deadlines are a reality in the exchange of published material. Even hymns change from the bulletin deadline to the time of the offertory procession.

I’ve never been a(n official) verger, so I don’t know for sure, but it seems to me that the disconnect between deadline and dissemination would drive you all crazy. Decisions must be made, absolutely, no exceptions, by Thursday at noon. On Saturday afternoon, everything has changed, and on Sunday morning, it’s been changed again. How maddening that must be for the organizer, the coordinator, the manager, the one who moves people from A to B, where A and B are always in flux. I sympathize (while protesting that I, myself *never cause* such distress), but I also rejoice in a deadline that subsequent changes can never effect. Pretty cool, huh? Whereas our Blessed Lord once said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile” (Jn 1:47), I can finally say, “Behold, a deadline that will never move!” By that I mean that it’s one thing to have a Pentecost deadline and write about fire and wind and have it delivered some time before Thanksgiving. It’s an entirely different thing to have August 15 as deadline: when one writes on August 15, it doesn’t matter when it gets delivered. The light of August 15 shines throughout the year, and it simply doesn’t matter if people are loving that light in August or March or November.

August 15 is the Feast of St. Mary the Virgin, and like the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels (September 29), it is not bound by deadlines. Certain feasts are calendar-bound: Christmas needs to be in winter; Easter needs to be in spring. Pentecost (or, at the latest, Trinity Sunday) needs to end the Church School year. You can’t move those things around. Mary, however, is like what Katherine Hepburn said about calla lilies in the movie *Stage Door*: suitable for every occasion. She presents our deadline on August 15, but quoting once again (this time from Lennon/McCartney): “When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom: ‘Let it be.’” I love it that the Beatles (and I am truly not a fan of the Beatles) associated that wonderful phrase “let it be” with “Mother Mary.” (And don’t even think about applying some nefarious interpretation to “Mother Mary” – been there, done that, took the hits for doing the song in church 40 years ago; when they say “Mother Mary,” they mean Mother Mary.)

We all stand at the verge, so to speak, of a new program year, where plans will change on a dime, deadlines will be drop-dead, but the deadline content is subject to change without prior notice. I am beyond delighted to be writing this as August 14 becomes August 15, and the Feast of Saint Mary the Virgin rises in the east. Not just for today, but for the year – for eternity – “Mother Mary comes to me speaking words of wisdom: Let it be.”

As all our lives become crazier with the startup of a new program year, as deadlines come and go, as plans are set in concrete and then changed (and no one told you!), may we all bask in the shimmering mid-August sun and in the feast of Saint Mary the Virgin, who whispers words of wisdom to us all year long: let it go, let it be.

May every day be Blessed Mary’s day for you!

Devotedly

pete ~

Nominations for VGEC President

In September of 2004, at the VGEC Convention, the President will be elected for a three year term. As Chairman of the Nominating Committee, my job is to present a slate for this office. We are looking for these qualifications in said candidate:

1. Dynamic
2. Good organizational skills
3. Work for the good of the VGEC
4. Good communicating skills with Board Members and the VGEC members
5. Attendance at Conventions and Board Meetings
6. Willingness to serve

If you know of someone with these qualifications, please contact them prior to submitting their name to me. Please have all names to me as soon as possible so my committee can evaluate them and have the slate ready for the September VGEC Convention.

My home address:
Wynne Porter
2626 Sheffield Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46229
Phone: 317-894-7766
Email Address: Roy@vergers.org

On behalf of the Nominating Committee,
Thank you,
Wynne Porter

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***President David Jette Appoints
Second Guild Chaplain***

I am pleased to announce the appointment of the Reverend Milton C. Williams, Jr., as a Guild Chaplain. Fr. Williams will serve along side Pete Gustin and share all chaplain responsibilities. Let me share with you something of Milton's background. He is currently Priest Associate for pastoral care and outreach ministries for Trinity Church, Wall Street, New York. In conjunction with the pastoral and outreach ministries of Trinity, Fr. Williams is the Chaplain for Trinity's Pre-School.

Before coming to Trinity in April 1999, Fr. Williams was the Assistant Priest at the historic Pohick Episcopal Church, Fairfax County, Virginia. As the Assistant at Pohick, Fr. Williams was the coordinator for youth ministries, missions and outreach and music and liturgy. Williams served as an Executive Board Member to the Northern Virginia AIDS Ministry, a volunteer chaplain for Hospice of Northern Virginia and was an instructor of liturgy for the Leadership Program for Church Musicians, in the Diocese of Washington. Fr. Williams is a member of the Union of Black Episcopalians.

Williams holds a Bachelors of Science Degree from Virginia State University, Petersburg, Virginia, 1983, where he sang in the University's Concert Choir, was primary cantor for Christ and Grace Episcopal Church, Petersburg, and was Chaplain to the Bata Gamma Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. He obtained his Master of Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, 1987. While at Southern Seminary, he was appointed by both the Home and Foreign Mission Boards for the Southern Baptist Convention to serve as missionary in Brazil, South America and Fairbanks, Alaska. In 1987 Williams was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to serve in Macau, Southeast Asia for two years. In Macau, Williams taught at Pui Ching Middle School and the University of Southeast Asia. Williams also pastored a Filipino congregation while in Macau. In 1990, Fr. Williams was appointed by the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve as Church Missioner for Denver, Colorado. Following the end of that appointment, Williams began the process for Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church. Fr. Williams earned a Diploma in Anglican Studies from Virginia Seminary, Alexandria, Virginia, and is enrolled in a Doctor of Ministry program at Virginia Seminary. Fr. Williams is a native of Suffolk, Virginia, where his parents live today.

Milton is a valued colleague of mine and I am thrilled he will be part of our organization. You will have a chance to meet him at our Dallas conference as he has planned to be present with us for the entire weekend. He assures me he is thoroughly ready for Southfork!

David Jette
President, VGEC

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