



Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church

Service through Worship, Worship through Service

October, 2007



How I got the "Call": How I became involved with the Bi-Vocational Process

Submitted by Bob Bliss, Grace Episcopal Church, Georgetown, TX. Bob was Communications Chair for the Walter Mace Memorial Chapter VGEC for about a year. He has resigned that position, to follow a call to become a bi-vocational priest (via the Iona Program). Since he is still very interested in the ministry of vergers, he has submitted this story as an encouragement to all of us to hear God in our calling as ministers within the church.

For more years than I can remember my calling has been a strong and consistent inner voice telling me to "lead my people and take care of them." By 2006 the calling could no longer be ignored so in early August Melanie, my wife, Lee Ann, my daughter, and I took a weekend vacation in Galveston to discuss my feelings of being called with two special friends of ours, The Reverends Lillian and Bill Hyde. I have worked with both Bill and Lillian and felt comfortable discussing Holy Orders and that nagging voice calling me beyond my Baptismal covenant. After our discussion I spent some hours on the beach with an open heart to Jesus Christ praying and asking Him to reveal to me his desire for my ministry. I made a commitment to Jesus that whatever his will is for me, I would do. I put my faith and trust into his hands that all would be revealed in his time.

At the end of August 2006 I asked that a discernment committee be formed to help me determine the nature of my call and make a recommendation to the Vestry and Rector. Throughout the discernment process, my call has strengthened and I feel that Jesus Christ has led me to the Bi-vocational Priesthood.

My spiritual journey has been wrought with many difficulties, twists and turns. I certainly have made immature choices in my life as all of us do. All of which add up to life experiences. My life experiences have led me to a solid faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and service in His name. I have found forgiveness and I am able to forgive. I have found for everything I give I am blessed many times over. We live a life of abundance. Our family is a Christ

centered family and we enjoy the presence of Christ in everything we do.

My discernment has been nurtured and made fruitful by the members of my committee, friends, and family. I have the love of my mentors, Fr. Steve Rottgers who is our Rector and Fr. Francis Raffalovich, our Pastoral Associate, who at 84 has shown me that service to Christ has no boundaries. I am fortunate that they have blessed my life with love, wisdom and always a reminder that our God is a God of love and if you can't laugh you're in the wrong business. Whatever it is that Christ wants me to do I will embrace it and fulfill it to the best of my gifts, talents and abilities.

I have been blessed with loving and caring parents, a loving and caring wife of 17 years, and the joy of children. I cannot change things I have done wrong in the past. I can learn from the mistakes, not repeat them, and move forward. If I could change anything in my life I would have worked harder in making Christ the center of my life throughout my youth. Everything else good or not so good makes up my fabric of life. I choose now to dedicate myself to being a tentmaker, to Love and Serve the Lord, to Lead and Care for His People. If it is His will it will be done.

I hope to write another chapter in my journey for you as my track continues. The information and process for becoming a Bi-Vocational Priest or Deacon can be found on the Diocese of Texas web site. I have found the Diocese to be helpful, honest and open every step of the way. The process should always start with an honest assessment of oneself and if a Call is being made the nature of the Call will be revealed both in God's time and in His own way. Be patient and listen. There are a lot of good books to read on Hearing God's Call listed under the Diaconate process. Read them! Whether you are called to Laity, Priesthood or the Diaconate you are a servant. You are important.

Memorable Quotations

To laugh often and much; To win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; To earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others; To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; To know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded. Often attributed, albeit inaccurately, to Ralph Waldo Emerson.

From the Diary of a Verger: The Day Hollywood Came to Lincoln Cathedral

Submitted by John Campbell, Dean's Verger, Lincoln Cathedral, England.

Living in Minster Yard [Lincoln] can be interesting. Our house, built in 1355, nestles on the south side of the cathedral. Throughout the year we witness processions and marches as scouts and military bands lead parades, the Christmas Market offers much entertainment and a foot fall in the cathedral of about 40.000 in four days, as does the many Fire Work displays held in the Castle grounds [the best view is from our son's bedroom window high up on the third floor]. With all this in mind there should have been no surprise when we heard that there was to be filming in the Cathedral for the production of the film *The Da Vinci Code*.

As Dean's Verger of the Cathedral it was my responsibility to ensure the smooth running of the filming, co-ordinating the needs of the production company with those of the Cathedral and to ensure that the daily round of prayer and worship continued as much as possible, normally

Tom Hanks and Sir Ian Mckellen were to star with the French actress Audrey Tattou, all seemed simple, a cast of 300 locals would be solicited to be extras a crew would arrive and the whole thing would be in the bag within the week – or so we thought!

In the end the pre-production took two weeks and the filming itself indeed was completed within one week with another week tagged on for post-production. The crew and cast almost outnumbered the population of the city [or so it seemed]. In addition to the cast of 300 extras the pre-production team numbered 48 and the production team stood at a grand total of 186. All in all 204 hotel bedrooms were needed with crew billeted as far as Grantham.

Sleepy Minster Yard was transformed into a production village with no less than 21 vehicles parked up providing; electrical power, sets, security and yes, even a 'chuck wagon', which kept us supplied with a range of goodies; Patrick, [my eleven year old son] became quite accustomed to smoothies and stuffed vine leaves for a mid morning snack.

The production week was an experience not to be missed, to be at the centre of an event which encompassed so many disciplines [make up, 'sparkies',* 'chippies',* camera men, editors, wardrobe, directors, producers and yes actors] was indeed an eye opener! Requests were made and most granted, however a plea to have the Cathedral air conditioned did not come into fruition!

As the week went on we were able to join the cast and crew in the canteen, standing the queue for lunch with Tom Hanks behind you and eating with Ian Mckellen on the next table was bewildering. One morning a request for 'Frosties' by one of Tom's sons could not be granted by the caterers

so our cupboard was raided and for the next half hour I breakfasted with the Hanks family – bizarre!

At the end of each day the ranks of waiting fans, hoping for a glimpse of one of the stars, was interesting, all asking if " 'they' are coming out this door" did make us feel slightly guilty [only slightly mind!] when we had to say 'Mr. Hanks has left by another door'.

So what of the stars? Without exception it was a pleasure to see how these great media people were humbled to be able to work in this great building, they all thought it a privilege. Tom Hanks asked many questions about the Cathedral and what it stood for, and I was able to engage with him, and others, about his profession. He now knows the difference between a Dean and a Bishop, and I know the difference between a Grip and a Best Boy!

Did we get autographs? Yes we did. For three days of the filming I was joined by Patrick who was bowled over when Tom Hanks gave him a brief acting lesson of how to kneel on a stone floor for fifteen minutes without loosing the feeling in ones legs, as he got up rubbing his knees he said to Patrick 'beware your choice of profession', [mind you, Tom did not tell Patrick that a latex copy of the floor had been made for him and that he knelt in relative comfort]. Later Tom presented Patrick with his 'Sides [a scene script] with the quote and autograph on it.

However, for Patrick the greatest thrill was to meet Sir Ian Mckellen [Gandalf from *Lord of the Rings*] who used my vestry as a changing room. Sir Ian drew for Patrick a picture of Gandalf and signed it. Giving it to him he said, 'It's not very good - but I did it myself.

The discussion to allow the filming of this subject was not taken lightly and criticism was expected, it was interesting to talk with the hoards of general public milling around at the time and to hear there comments one to another; yes there was a modicum of hostility, there was also a great level of enquiry as to what was going on and why, but the vast majority of people accepted that the church is a part of modern life and that it was good that it did not stand back from society but engaged with it at all levels. Many people of differing faiths and none grasped the opportunity to talk not only about Dan Brown and his fictitious story but about God, Jesus and individual belief.

All gone, we missed the razzmatazz and buzz of activity, the friendships made and just passing by the cast and crew, we all remember fondly the time Hollywood came to Lincoln and our back door!

**Translation from English slang to American slang: "Sparkies": electricians and "chippies": carpenters*

A Biography of a Training Officer

Ron Robertson, who has been training officer in three dioceses, has been chief Training Officer for the Mace Chapter for two terms. Since he was trained by Walter Mace, for whom our chapter was named, his history as a training officer in his own words, might be of interest to everyone.

I studied under Walter (“Waco”) Mace for 6 years, learning nearly everything that he could teach me about being a vergers and an acolyte master. I moved to a new job up in Dallas in 1988 and started working as an acolyte master at my church. The priest left the church right after I started there, and I had to take over the operation of the church as nearly everyone also left when the priest did. I handled contacting and relating to all of the supply priests for the interim period, along with other church details for more than a year, before Father David Holland was moved up to Lewisville from Angleton. And he had never had the services of a vergers before. He liked what I did and how I did it.

After Bishop Stanton was elected bishop of Dallas, Stanton decided that he wanted to establish a Vergers Chapter in the Diocese of Dallas. We had talked during the search process, before Stanton became Bishop, and once elected he remembered me. He called one day to talk about setting up a Guild Chapter. He lead his clergy through the vergers training sessions and asked me to be the training officer. I started training more than 80 vergers in that first set of sessions using the National Guild basic training manual. I’ve since revised it and updated several

sections for these times and have added several exams to help new vergers learn the details of the prayer book.

The normal training sessions take 5 or 6 months to complete, because new vergers must know all of the details of being a vergers and about working closely with their clergy. They will understand these details when they finish the program. I am in my second term as training officer for the Mace Chapter. As of this writing I have trained 190 new vergers. At each session I get the clergy involved so they understand what we are doing relative to the details of the training. The primary ministry of a vergers is to be of service to the clergy. With any luck I’ll make it to 200 trainees by the end of this term as training officer. One of my first Vergers trainees (Duke duTeil) has just recently been selected to be the Head Vergers at the National Cathedral in Washington D. C., so I must be doing something right with this training process. This servant ministry is not to be taken lightly and requires a great deal of work and planning. Working in coordination with the local clergy, and having fellowship with other vergers, is critical to shaping the local expression of this servant ministry.

The Church of England Guild of Vergers (CEVG)

75TH Anniversary Seminar and Cruise

*by Bidwell Drake, St. James’ the Apostle, Conroe**

What a beautifully planned, marvelous two-day celebration! Even the tube strike could not dampen the festivities, and I was lucky enough to make friends with Tina from Yeovil whilst walking from Waterloo to Westminster. The cruise on the Thames was such fun - it’s amazing that people go sailing in small boats on such a busy waterway. The lights of London after dark were wonderful, it was a great pleasure to see old friends again, and Tom baked the best fruit cake EVER. (Is the secret the amount of booze that goes over it afterwards?)

No matter where one is on the high-low scale as an Anglican, the East End churches would meet one’s needs. We saw a wider range of architecture and liturgy than one could imagine - an extremely high Anglo-Catholic church with a wrought iron fence that protects the altar; an affluent one with a “boat” gallery that hangs over the nave, a poor one with a multi-cultural ministry that could not imagine installing an elevator; another that is very traditional and made me think of the interiors in country

churches, very modern to very old-fashioned - the variety was fantastic.

The memory of 180 vergers processing up the sidewalk from St. Martin/Ludgate to St. Paul’s will be with me forever - how glorious it was!

Congratulations to Tom and Denise for organizing such a splendid celebration - and my heartfelt thanks that I was able to attend. As we say over here, “Been there, done that, got the T-shirt.”

** Bid Drake, as the only vergers from the U.S. able to attend this event in England in 2007, represented the vergers from our diocese there. Feel free to ask her about verging in England and the novel, old, and different things she saw while there. A photo is being disseminated separately. Yeovil is a town in Somerset, England, about 120 miles north of London.*

Question for the Month: What Makes a Good Verger or M.C.?

Like members of the Altar Guild, vergers are appointed locally by the priest in charge of a specific congregation. Who makes a good candidate for recommendation to the clergy for appointment as verger? What do you think makes you, personally, a good verger?

Joe Sturdevant, a past president of our Chapter, has suggested the following areas to consider:

- a skills and knowledge base involving being a student of liturgy, teaching ability, ability to plan, and a good communicator
- relationship characteristics, including the ability to work in harmony with other vergers and laity serving the church, ability to quickly respond to changes dictated by the moment, and the willingness to carry out the (rector's) wishes without regard to one's own preferences
- personal characteristics, including delighting in being the producer (rather than the director or star) of an event.

Walter Stuart, a member of our Chapter and Treasurer of the national VGEC, notes that the chief liturgical officer (CLO) in a particular setting is the rector/vicar/dean of the church where you serve as verger or MC. Local and national guilds do not set policy on liturgical customs for the local parish. "The VGEC chapters and national organization are there for training, guidance, reference, and support. We need to remember that we serve at the pleasure

of the (rector)." Our reputation is dependent on our ability to *work in concert* with all of the parish leaders, both clergy and laity, knowing that our ministry is part of a greater scheme of things. The ministry of verger is just one of several important ministries within the life of the parish, and as such requires us to be very dignified and unobtrusive in the performance of our ministry, off and on "stage". Where the parish's style of liturgy seems to conflict with the Book of Common Prayer or one's own sensibilities, the verger and CLO need to have a meaningful conversation, remembering in the midst of working out any fellowship about details, that the (rector's) decision is final.

My own additions to his list would include a humility of spirit that bespeaks of this office's being a servant ministry, and a definite love of God and a real sense of the commissioning under our baptismal covenant. So, I ask you this question -- What makes a good verger or M.C.? What makes you a good verger or M.C.? If you feel free to do so, let me know some characteristics -- or at least, some funny stories about being a verger -- that can be published. And if you have any questions that you would like to see posed to the Diocese of Texas vergers, email me with those, also.

My email is mlfm1943@yahoo.com.
Thanks, Peggy Metcalf

QUESTION DU JOUR:

What is *The Consortium of Endowed Episcopal Parishes (CEEP)*?

The CEEP has a pamphlet, *The Other Endowment: Development of Parish Volunteers*, available through their website. Five parishes within the state of Texas are members of this organization. These include St. John the Divine/Houston/DOT, St. David's/ Austin/Diocese of Texas, St. Mark's/San Antonio/Diocese of West Texas; St Michael's and All Angels/Dallas/Diocese of Dallas, and Church of the Incarnation, Dallas, Diocese of Dallas.

Revised Common Lectionary: A Reminder from the Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Parish leadership is reminded that General Convention has directed that, effective the First Sunday of Advent 2007, the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) is the lectionary of the Episcopal Church. The RCL has much to commend it. Some differences with the BCP lectionary include:

- * The option of semi-continuous reading of the great Old Testament narratives on the Sundays after Pentecost
- * The option of lections in thematic harmony with the Gospel of the day for the Sundays after Pentecost
- * The inclusion of women and their role in salvation history, offering texts about women never heard on Sunday before.

Two Internet links which contain information on the RCL as well as resources for ordering supplies are:

http://episcopalchurch.org/19625_19606_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=19605

http://episcopalchurch.org/19625_19614_ENG_HTM.htm?menupage=19613

From the V-List, November 22, 2004: Whoops! Wine was spilled on the Missal!!

Andy Morgret, Verger, St. Elisabeth's Episcopal Church, Memphis, TN shared this piece of wisdom with the V-list November 22, 2004.

One of our LEM's spilled wine on our Service Book yesterday morning at the main service. Being St. Elisabeth's Verger du Jour, here is what I did.

The best thing I could find in the sacristy was a clean dish rag. I dabbed a little water on it, and then got almost all of the wine off the page of the book. Then, leaving the book open, I placed that rag between the pages on one side. I then got another rag and did the same thing on the other side of the page. This let me move to other pages in the Service Book. (It's called a Service Book, but it is actually the Missal.)

After the service, our library expert was summoned and

remarked that I had done the correct thing. She took the book home with her, and will use a blow dryer to dry the page, and then iron it with a dry iron as needed.

Wherever there is liquid, it will surely spill, one day, and often at the most embarrassing time.

For those who wish to investigate further the care and feeding of books, check out [The Care and Feeding of Books Old and New: A Simple Repair Manual for Book Lovers](#) by Margot Rosenberg and Bern Marcowitz, ISBN-10 1-56731-772-3 and ISBN-13 978-1-56731-772-5.

Presentation for the Mace Memorial Chapter VGEC— September 22, 2007 Chapter Meeting By The Very Rev. Joe Reynolds, Dean, Christ Church Cathedral

Dean Reynolds began with a definition of what a cathedral is: a place of pilgrimage, a place of radical hospitality, a place to release control and power, a place of learning,

Dean Reynolds also gave us a bit of history lesson: Christ Church Cathedral, which was established as the parish of Christ Church in 1939, is the oldest worshipping community in Houston. The steer on the Diocesan Seal is not the UT longhorn but attributed to the fact that as a cattle drive passed the construction site on Texas Avenue, the drover asked what was happening, and then gave a steer to the construction crew for the development of the church. The original deed for the plot of land was from the Republic of Texas rather than the present state.

In the year 1949 Christ Church was designed a cathedral. The Very Rev. Joe Reynolds is both the dean and rector of Christ Church. The word cathedra means bishop's chair or speaking place. The only place the pope is considered infallible is ex cathedra or from the chair. The Cathedral is the bishop's pulpit.

The cathedral's mission is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ. The vision is to seek and serve the congregation, the diocese and the city. Reynolds told us that people go to church to be found by God. He also said that people seek the church for a place of belonging. (Is there a place for me?) People will drift away with out this feeling. When in search mode, people will find the Episcopal Church, usually as the last stop on a spiritual journey. If they do not find this sense of belonging, people usually

leave the Episcopal Church and go no where, just drift away.

The De Pelchin Children's Center and Sheltering Arms we founded by Christ Church Cathedral more than 100 years ago.

Reynolds also gave us an overview of The Beacon and The Dunn Center. The Dunn Center houses the Diocesan Offices, Compass (which assists with employment, bus tokens, identification, mail drop, and gold cards) and The Beacon. It also houses the Cathedral Health Ministries, a Mobile Clinic that goes to various schools on the East Side and to Montrose 2 or 3 nights a week, and the Justice Project which is legal aide and homeless court.

Afterwards Father James McGill, canon missionary for Christ Church, took us on a tour of the facilities at The Beacon, which feeds about 500 people a day on the three days of operation: Saturday, Sunday and Monday. The Beacon volunteers also wash and fold numerous loads of clothing for the street folk using The Beacon. The Beacon also has several self contained shower facilities, so those same folk can shower when they are using the facilities available to them. For those wishing to make donations, in addition to monetary donations, new socks and new underwear for both males and females are greatly appreciated. Each person using the facility is given a pair of new socks and appropriate underwear.

Submitted by Patricia Shepherd, Secretary/Treasurer

Annual Dues

Annual dues are \$20.00. Please make your checks payable to: Walter Mace Memorial Chapter VGEC and send to: Patricia Shepherd, 5326 Carmen, Houston, TX 77033

Contact Information

We are constantly trying to keep your contact information up to date so that we are able to keep you informed of all activities within our Chapter. Please notify the Communications Officer, Bid Drake at bdrake2939@consolidated.net, whenever there is a change in your address, phone number or e-mail.

Thanks!

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Newsletter

The Chapter newsletter is posted on our website at www.texasvergers.org and e-mailed to all members who have given us their e-mail. If you want a copy mailed to you, please contact our Communications Officer, Bid Drake at bdrake2939@consolidated.net or by phone 926-756-3566. Please provide your name and complete address.

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