

**Walter Mace Chapter  
of the  
Vergers' Guild  
of the  
Episcopal Church**

The Mace Chapter hosts an annual all-day Training Seminar in March of each year. Three other meetings occur each year, usually during January, June, and September. Each meeting provides an opportunity for fellowship with other vergers, as well as a time devoted to training on specific areas of the vergers' ministry. An outside speaker addresses items of interest relating to good churchmanship at each meeting. All vergers, those interested in the ministry of verger, and clergy are welcome to attend these meetings. Announcements about exact dates are carried on our web site and in *The Texas Episcopalian*.

Training sessions are also available at the local church level, at the invitation of the clergyperson in charge or the vergers of the particular congregation. Training assistance is available through the chapter's Training Coordinator, or one of the associate training officers in each area (Houston, Austin, Tyler) of the Diocese of Texas. The Chapter also hosts mentoring sessions, on an irregular basis, for those wishing to work on the national vergers' guild certification.

To receive the e-newsletter or quarterly newsletter of the chapter, contact the Communications Officer, whose email is listed on the Chapter's web site.

**What is a Verger?**

A verger is a committed lay minister within the Church who assists the clergy in the conduct of public worship, especially in the marshaling of processions. Vergers may be full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer. Their duties can be purely ceremonial or include other responsibilities, such as parish administration, being part of the worship committee, or acting as sacristan. Vergers serve in various capacities in the church and in the liturgy, such as chalice bearer, lay reader, protector of the procession, master of ceremonies, and sacristan. The Office of Verger dates back to the Middle Ages when as "Protector of the Procession" the verger led the procession to the church, cathedral or civic building, clearing the way for the procession and protecting it from vagabonds and animals in the way. The verger wears a gown and carries a virge, or staff of office, to help clear the path, and point the way for the procession.

**Where did Vergers Originate?**

The Office of Verger has its roots in the earliest days of the Church's history. It shares certain similarities with the formerly ordained minor orders of porter and acolyte. Generally speaking, vergers were responsible for the order and upkeep of the house of worship, including preparations for the liturgy, the conduct of the laity, and grave-digging. Although there is no definitive historical survey of the Office of Verger, evidence from Rochester, Lincoln, Exeter, and Salisbury

Cathedrals in England indicates the existence of vergers as far back as the 12<sup>th</sup> century. A familiar sight in English Cathedrals, vergers have maintained the buildings and furnishings of the Church for many centuries. The Church of England Guild of Vergers (CEGV) was formed in 1932 as a fellowship of vergers within the Anglican Communion. The Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church was formed in 1989 in order to provide fellowship and resources to the growing number of vergers within the Episcopal Church.

**Why Vergers Today?**

The contemporary office of verger is experiencing a rapid expansion within the Episcopal Church. Differing from the Church of England, where vergers are often full-time paid employees of the Church, American vergers are more often than not volunteers with a special calling to the ordering and conduct of the church's liturgy. Clergy throughout the church have come to appreciate the ministry of vergers within their local congregations, in addition to their ability to organize large processions for diocesan events. Vergers can relieve the clergy of the burden of liturgical detail so that the clergy can concentrate on their priestly duties to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments. No longer found primarily in cathedrals and large parishes, vergers are an asset to any worshiping community. It is said that there is a verger in every congregation, whether or not one has been identified as such.

**Purposes of the  
Walter Mace Memorial Chapter  
of the VGEC**

- To encourage, affirm, and support clergy, vergers and congregations in various areas of their local ministries
- To promote fellowship amongst vergers and vergers with clergy, to encourage the sharing of ideas, skills and knowledge
- To provide formal training for verger designates
- To provide continuing education and fellowship for those in the verger ministry
- To promote the imagery provided in the baptismal service as part of the training programs
- To provide standardization of training and mentoring for certification by the national VGEC
- To promote communication amongst guild members via the web site and newsletters
- To promote fellowship with the Altar Guild and Acolyte Guild
- To provide mutual assistance by advice and counsel regarding on-the-job problems
- To maintain the pastoral, administrative and liturgical traditions of the office of Verger

The **Walter Mace Memorial Chapter of the Vergers' Guild of the Episcopal Church** (VGEC) is the chapter of the VGEC chartered for the Episcopal Diocese of Texas. Named in memory of Walter ("Wacco") Mace, a soft-spoken Scotsman who served at St. Dunstan's/Houston as one of the first vergers in the Episcopal Diocese of Texas, the chapter has grown rapidly since its inception in 1997, until now it has over 100 members and several training classes in progress. By way of honoring our baptismal vows, we support our members through prayer and by example in worship and in service.

For further information refer to our web sites:  
[www.texasvergers.org](http://www.texasvergers.org)  
[www.epicenter.org](http://www.epicenter.org) ("Organizations")  
[www.vergers.org](http://www.vergers.org) (national VGEC)



Emails for the officers of the chapter, including the Communications Officer and Training Coordinator, are listed on the web site.

**Walter Mace Memorial Chapter  
of the  
Vergers' Guild  
of the  
Episcopal Church**



**Worship through Service  
and  
Service through Worship**

[www.texasvergers.org](http://www.texasvergers.org)