



The Vergers Voice

The news blog of the Vergers Guild

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Friday, January 9, 2015

Virge Holder at Christ Church in Greenville, S.C.



Virge Holder at Christ Church Episcopal in Greenville, S.C. designed and made by parishioner Jack McKay
Photo by Gayle Saylor, Verger

By Ken Holloway, News Manager, VGEC

Take fifteen years of woodworking experience mixed with a lifetime of love for the church and the result is a beautifully functional virge holder made by Jack McKay of [Christ Church Episcopal](#) in Greenville, S.C.

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Our story begins with Jack's query to Barry Norris, of the [VGEC Guild Shop](#), about the availability of a VGEC shield finial. Barry and Jack corresponded on the matter and determined that Jack had seen the VGEC guild shield finial on the virges of the church's vergers who had graduated from the VGEC Training Course. This finial was made available to Jack, and can be seen, in the photograph above, at the crest of the upper fixture of the rack.

As is often the case, there's more to this story than meets the eye. After completing his Navy service in 1963, Jack joined AT&T's technical staff. In December of 1989, he retired. He had spent 26 years engineering and fixing things electrically communicative, so it was only logical that, when he learned about the [Greenville Wood Workers Guild](#), he joined. (You do follow the connection don't you?)

You see he had, at his mother's request, built a coffee table for her using an illustration she found in "Woman's Day" magazine. That was a very long time ago, using tools that his family bought for him just for the coffee table project. After that project, life intervened and he had not worked with wood until fifteen years ago, when he joined the five hundred member Greenville Wood Workers Guild. Since that time, he has honed his wood working skills to the point that he is now a shift supervisor for the guild's 20,000 square foot wood shop operation.

A while back, the members of the wood workers guild joined together in building the altar, altar rail, pulpit, lectern, font and paschal candle stand for [St. Phillip's Episcopal Church](#) locally. Jack drew the assignment of the paschal candle stand.

Recently, Jack was asked to think about how he would build a rack for the virges now used by his own church. He did just that by finding a connection with the St. Phillip's project. Now look at the picture again and envision the upper shelf turned to the vertical. You see, Jack used the pattern of the St. Phillip's paschal candle holder for the top of the virge holder by turning it on its side. His splendid design and workmanship fine-tunes the harmony of form and function with a small dose of flair (which is clear now that you are privy to the inside story).

As can be seen, the church has three "Fellows of the VGEC" (a Fellow is someone who has successfully completed the [VGEC Training Course](#).) The longer virge in the center of the rack was commissioned by Jack Grady, the first verger at Christ Church more than forty years ago. When Jack died, his son made sure that the church had access to the treasured and historical virge.

In interviewing Jack McKay and Gayle Saylor, I found my own connection to Christ Church. One of their former priests, Rev. Keith Turbeville, had performed his field work here in Round Rock, TX at [St. Richard's Episcopal Church](#) during his student days at the [Seminary of the Southwest](#) in Austin.

Our connections to each other are often more than just a voice on the telephone or fingers on a keyboard far away. They begin and end within our hearts, as we strive to work in God's ministries day by day. Would I have learned that Fr. Turbeville is now rector of [Holy Trinity by the Lake](#) in Rockwall, TX had I not pursued this very interesting story of talented hearts dedicated to serving Christ?

By the way, Jack says that any competent wood worker could duplicate his design by using the photograph as a guide. Who will do so, and send us photographs of their work?

Abstract: A virge storage device for your parish church can be modeled after the design used at Christ Church Episcopal in Greenville, S.C. Jack McKay, a Christ Church parishioner, joined the Greenville Wood Working Guild fifteen years ago. As a guild project, he worked on restoring St. Phillip's Episcopal church in Greenville, then used his experience and talent to craft a beautifully functional rack for the virges at his home parish.

Posted by [Ken Holloway](#) at 8:26 AM



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