



Welcome to the [Vergers Voice](#), the official news blog of the [Vergers Guild of the Episcopal Church](#). Also known as the VGEC, we are located on the web at [vergers.org](#) and [facebook.com/vergerguild](#) the #1 online resources for vergers world-wide.

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Friday, March 27, 2015

## how it works: The Verger's Voice Blog

# how it works

By the VGEC Communications Committee

*Editor's note: As we prepare to shut down publication of the Verger's Voice during Holy Week, we thought it might be interesting to let our readers know how this blog happens...*

Ever since the founding of the [VGEC](#) in the late 1980's, several members have worked hard to produce a regular newsletter of the guild. Having consistent membership communications is one measure of success of a service organization like the VGEC.

Located in the [archives of the VGEC](#), you can find wonderful examples of the evolution of the print newsletters of the guild:

- [News and Information](#), May, 1988 (first print newsletter)
- [The President's Memo](#), December, 1989
- [The President's Virge](#), August, 1991
- [On the Verge](#), April, 1995
- [The Verger's Voice](#), March, 1996
- [The Verger's Voice](#), January, 2004
- [The Verger's Voice](#), Summer, 2010 (final print newsletter)

We have come a long way since then! In 2015, the Verger's Voice continues to thrive as a weekly blog at [vergersvoice.org](#). The blog takes a number of volunteers to make it work. Here is the process from those who actually work on it every week.

### From [Ken Holloway](#), News Editor

In 2010, I became the assistant verger at the [Washington National Cathedral](#) under the leadership of [Duke DuTeil](#). Although I had to return home to Texas after just five months, I drank daily from the fire hose of history and experience available there and have missed it ever since. After returning to Texas, I noticed an invitation for help on the Communications Committee and volunteered. Scott Smith, then chair of that committee, asked me to do some writing, and, since I am old and gullible, I said that I'd give it a whirl. What began as a few tasks eventually turned into the weekly blog format that we now have in the Verger's Voice. That was almost three years ago and our little team has continued to perfect our regular process performing as your virtual weekly town crier. It is quite a productive team too. Your VGEC Communications Committee is always thinking, "Who would want to know about or read about..."

Scott, now president of the VGEC, Eileen Brightwell Hicks, chair of the committee, and I talk and email several times a week about topic, and "cc" Michael Sanchez, board liaison and social media manager, at every step. I typically have about 30 articles started at any point in time, so all manner of drafts are rolling around in my head and on my computer. Sometimes choice of subject is easy - annual conference announcements, board updates, training course changes, etc.

### Search [vergersvoice.org](#)

 

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### Past issues of the Printed Vergers Voice

Often, Scott sends me an "idea-text" like this one:

"Ken, I had an interesting conversation this morning trying to explain to somebody what a verger was and what a guild is. Maybe a blog topic, how to explain exactly what we do? White robes? Who wears black? Our guild vs. the Lollipop guild!

Sent from iPhone - please excuse brevity and typos!"

Then I start doodling. I often interview various people on the phone or by email and after that, I doodle some more. Finally, I quit doodling and start writing. I write a few more notes or sentences until a theme comes out of my pencil and lays itself right there in front of me. As soon as I really see the theme, I can start actually telling the story.

Usually I find that I've written more than needed, so I whack at the draft until it can be read aloud without taking more than 15 breaths. Then I look for a graphic or photographic illustration to place beneath the headline. That done, I'll extract the article's essence into the abstract. By Wednesday afternoon I'm done, so I pass control to Eileen for editing. Only one person at a time should be in the blog post so we try to have a definite hand off of duties.

#### From [Eileen Brightwell Hicks](#), Committee Chair and Content Editor and Verger Document Library Manager

I started as a volunteer proof reader for the Guild in 2012. While we were all at the VGEC Annual Conference in Lakeland, Florida, I read some of the information the guild had handed out at the General Convention earlier that year and was appalled at the grammatical errors in the materials. I love being a verger and I love our guild, and I wanted it to be as professional as possible. So I volunteered to help proofread materials. Once I "proofed" I was up to the job, Scott kept sending me more material to proof and manage- like the entire web site and the [VGEC Document Library](#)! Many months later came the work on the [vergersvoice.org](#) blog.

With the weekly blog I try to be the guilty conscience - "It's Thursday night and I haven't seen this week's blog post yet!" Once Ken has reduced his writing to 15 breaths length, he passes it on to me and usually I reduce it more. I edit, I clip, I cut. I put in links, I edit again. I ask Scott, "What were we thinking about this? Who came up with this idea? Back to Ken, talk with Scott. I try to edit the HTML (still learning) and it was my idea to have the Big Bed Button for conference registration always available at the bottom of each post. On Thursday night I finish my initial editing hand the post over to Scott.

#### From [Scott Smith](#), President and Cheerleader

When I was appointed webmaster of the VGEC at the annual conference in San Diego in 2009, I immediately started thinking about continuing the publication of the print newsletter, the Verger's Voice. With so many other things to do, that stayed on the back burner for some time.

In October 2010, we managed to produce [one final print version](#) and in July 2011, we moved the newsletter into a [news section of the yearbook](#) that we planned to print each year. That work was not only exhausting, it was also very expensive and the newsletter material was out of date before it went to the printers. We continued to struggle, thinking of ways to bring that process into the twenty-first century.

During that time, we had an email news service called [V-Happenings](#) that worked pretty well keeping members informed of news electronically. Over many months in late 2012 and early 2013, we worked to transition that work into a more regular news blog which would also serve as it's own repository of news for the archives. Finally, on July 1, 2013, the Verger's Voice bog was born with the [first real post](#). It was short and sweet, but it was a start. The blog now has become part of our weekly routine and is a huge part of our communications strategy for the VGEC. Now, back to the process...

Once Eileen passes the blog to me for the week, usually very late in the evening on Thursday, it's already about 99% complete and we have all been talking about it via email and text. I read it mainly for fact checking and I sometimes add a few more links into the piece. Sometimes I forward to the board for review and comment depending on the topic or other needs. I am the main HTML guru, so I try to make sure that the inner markup for the blog text is clean (for non-tech folks, that's geek-talk for cleaning up the formatting so it will load on most devices and in most browsers). Then I send it back to Eileen around midnight for final publication.

#### From Eileen (again!)

I'm a morning person. So early Friday morning, I'm online with the blog for my final proofing of what Scott did (or messed up) Thursday night. As a proofreader I read it at least 5 times-forward, backwards, out loud, walk away and come back for 2 more readings. Then I get the huge responsibility of pushing the "Publish" button by 9 am CST and it's done. Except that nobody really sees it until Michael does his magic.

#### From [Michael Sanchez](#), Committee Board Liaison, Social Media Manager, and Webmaster

I got involved with the Communications Committee around 2010 when Scott sent out an email

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asking for help with Facebook and the Guild's social media presence. I figured there'd be scores of people willing to help out, but as it turns out, I was the only one, so I've been helping out with social media ever since!

As for my part of the creative process for our weekly blog, I usually keep myself out of the way and let the grown-ups do their work! On occasion, I'll chime in, but largely my work doesn't happen until Friday morning. Then, it's time to rock and roll!

Friday morning, I'll make sure that the article has been published by Eileen. I'll head on over to the VGEC Membership Management System control center, log in, and export our email list. We always have new members or address changes during the week, so I make sure and get up-to-the-second addresses for our email blast.

After I download the file containing all the email addresses, I'll go into our mailing service, MailChimp, and put together the email blast. I have a template that I work from so that you can receive a consistent, polished look every week. I import the article graphic, title, link, and abstract into the email template. Now the mailing starts to take shape.

When you receive a mailing, you'll notice that at the very top of the email message, there are a few short words that give a sneak peek as to what the article is about. I try to make it funny, but I'm probably not as successful as I'd like to think!

After I've checked to make sure that all the links work, I click the E-Mail-Go button, and it reaches your inbox a few minutes later.

The Blog is Published!

So there you have it - the rather well-defined and choreographed yet oddly chaotic routine that volunteers in the VGEC go through each week to keep the verger-related content flowing from the Verger's Voice blog.

It's a fun process, and if you are interested in getting involved, please contact [news@vergers.org](mailto:news@vergers.org) and we'll put you to work! If you have story ideas or suggestions, please send those to us as well.

*Editor's note: This was an all-time record when Scott sent the final draft to Eileen at 5:52am CDT Friday morning.*

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Click the big red button to [register for the 2015 Annual Conference](#) being held October 1-4, 2015 in St. Louis, Missouri:



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*Abstract: As we prepare to shut down publication of the Verger's Voice during Holy Week, we thought it might be interesting to let our readers know how this blog happens...*

Posted by [Ken Holloway](#) at 8:06 AM



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