



# The Vergers Voice

*The news blog of the Vergers Guild*

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Friday, May 1, 2015

## Country Verger



The Rev. Geoffrey Butcher dedicating the new cremorial in the church garden at Trinity Church, Russellville, Ky, assisted by verger Tom Luckett (in the background), who oversaw the construction and installation of the distinctive repository

By the Rev. Geoffrey Butcher, Priest-in-Charge, Trinity Church, Russellville, Kentucky

It might seem unlikely to find a verger in a small congregation in a small town in southern Kentucky. Vergers are routinely found in large churches and cathedrals. But [Trinity Episcopal Church](#), founded in 1836, has a splendid verger who carries the keys as well as the verge. His name is [Tom Luckett](#), retired Network Operations Resource Manager from Bell South. Tom has been living in Russellville for the past 42 years.

My experience with vergers was primarily in cathedral churches where I served in the ministry for 41 years. The first verger for the [Cathedral Church of St. John, Albuquerque, NM](#), was appointed in the 1970's during my tenure. He was Jon Simms Receconi who later became a priest. I was also on the staff of [Christ Church Cathedral, Nashville](#), when the first verger, Randy Parsons, was named in the 1990's. I didn't anticipate having the privilege to sponsor the first verger in a small church in rural Kentucky. But Scott Smith, one of the vergers from Nashville, realized that Trinity already had a verger. He just didn't have the title.

Together we noted that Tom was serving in the tradition of vergers in small English parish churches who spend more time opening and locking doors than seating prelates. Tom serves in ceremonial roles, especially at Easter and Christmas, but most weeks he is checking the heat and air, tending to the fabric of the buildings, supervising restoration projects for our lovely 1883 church building, setting up chairs for the adult class, making coffee, listening to and counseling parishioners needing help with their issues, and perpetually giving enumerable courtesies to the Priest-in-Charge. Tom performs multiple roles and is the key lay person overseeing the welfare of the congregation. His official installation as verger was on April 16, 2012, with assistance from Bill Gleason and Scott Smith.

Tom and his wife are the primary couple in charge of hospitality, welcoming visitors and newcomers to the congregation. Tom also serves as "clerk" by notifying the congregation of special events by email, and phones the "grande dame" of the congregation to let her know what is going on, knowing full well that she is probably already involved in the event he is announcing. Lucille is the only person in the congregation who doesn't have a computer. Such a machine seems too complicated for her, which is the same reason she refuses to buy a new Cadillac with touch screen and Bluetooth streaming audio.

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One of the virtues that vergers aspire to is living their ministry of service with grace and modesty. Tom is a model of humility. He seeks no praise and does most of his good works behind the scenes. In addition to being Verger, he is a member of the Bishop's Committee and with his beloved wife, Pat, who serves as a leader of the ECW, worships faithfully throughout the year.

Vergers are sometimes known as the "minister with the stick." This is Tom, but he might be holding a shovel instead of a verge. He hasn't been assigned the role of "grave digger," which some vergers have had, but he oversaw the building of a cremorial in the church garden for the below-ground placement of cremains. He continues to manage that ministry.

Most of the responsibilities vergers have held through the years have been assigned to Tom who performs these duties with impeccable integrity. His worship of God and love for others is a daily activity carried out in his ministry as verger. May Tom and all vergers continue to serve our Lord and the people of God with such exemplary dedication.

Editor's Note: For reference to the variety of verger roles, see: [Walk Softly and carry a Big Stick – with Love: The Emerging Ministry of the Verger in the Late 20th Century to the Present. Masters Thesis](#) by David Deutsch located in the VGEC [Document Library](#). As a result of his research, Geoffrey said, "This should be required reading for every verger!"

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*Abstract: Russellville, Kentucky is filled with historical stories. One of those stories is all about Trinity Church. The Rev. Geoff Butcher, Priest in Charge, talks about his congregation and particularly how his "Country Verger," Tom Lockett, was destined to be the verger there.*

Posted by [Ken Holloway](#) at 7:35 AM



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