



The Vergers Voice

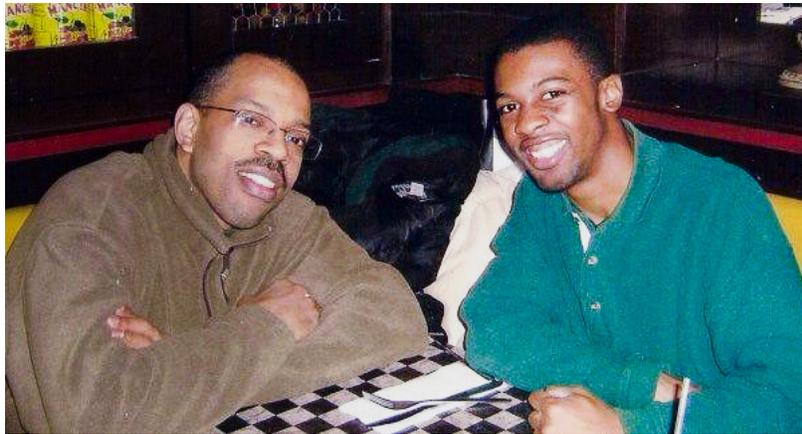
The news blog of the Vergers Guild

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, July 17, 2015

Planting a Seed



Cecil Brewster with Sandy Burrell at Sandy's recent birthday celebration

By Sandy Burrell, acolyte and verger at [St. Luke's Episcopal Church, The Bronx, NY](#)

In 1987, at ten years old, I joined the acolytes at St. Luke's Episcopal Church. The late Mr. Webster B. Tapper (1925-1991) was the acolyte trainer and leader at that time. His successor, Cecil Brewster and several others maintained Mr. Tapper's training methods with greatest respect for his inspirational presence which still exists to this day. I progressed from probationary acolyte, to acolyte, to altar server, and finally to senior acolyte. In 2000, Cecil announced he was stepping down as head of the acolytes. He passed the torch to me. After taking charge of the acolytes I was recruited by Eric Petersen in 2005 to prepare to become the first person to formally hold the title of verger at St. Luke's.

I heard about the VGEC and fortunately already had vacation scheduled to accommodate attending my first VGEC Annual Conference which was held in Swanee, Tennessee in 2005. Whatever doubts I had about being involved in the verger ministry were calmed after talking with others at the event. Those conversations helped me understand that the verger ministry is a natural progression of what I learned during my acolyte training. That made it much easier for me to visualize and plan my new responsibilities. I returned home and worked on preparing myself. With the blessing of the late Mrs. Viola Tapper, I announced to the congregation on March 19, 2006, that my ministry to the church as verger would be in memory of and dedicated to my late mentor Mr. Tapper.

I feel Mr. Tapper was really the first verger at St. Luke's so I wanted to acknowledge his long history of work on behalf of the congregation. During September every year, in observance of the month that Mr. Tapper, I vest strictly as an acolyte while serving.

Because of my having led the acolyte corps at St. Luke's for so long, many in our community urged me to write a leadership book that approached a young audience. I was a little bit tentative at first, but after seeing someone I knew from my college days as a member of the National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE) display his recently published book, I had no excuse for further delay. Cecil encouraged me to consider a bible-based inspirational book for youth.

After wrestling with the unknown path to publication for several months, I started recalling and

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- ▼ 2015 (30)
 - ▼ July 2015 (3)
 - [Planting a Seed](#)
 - [Verger's Eyes: General Convention Wrap-Up](#)
 - [Vergers Eyes: Our Active Booth and a Short Side Tr...](#)
 - ▶ June 2015 (7)
 - ▶ May 2015 (5)
 - ▶ April 2015 (3)
 - ▶ March 2015 (4)
 - ▶ February 2015 (4)
 - ▶ January 2015 (4)
- ▶ 2014 (50)
- ▶ 2013 (17)
- ▶ 2012 (12)
- ▶ 2011 (10)
- ▶ 2010 (15)
- ▶ 2009 (2)

Past issues of the Printed Vergers Voice

- [2010 VGEC Archives](#)

writing about discussions among the acolytes that had occurred during acolyte practices on Saturday mornings and elsewhere over the past twenty-five year period. Over two years, I found that I had written a book that would hopefully spark the conversation that motivates the youth and empowers them to take on responsibilities and not to feel intimidated.

In October 2014 with the help of Xulon Press, "[Seed Time: An Inspirational Book for the Youth](#)" was published. I am excited to say that it is now available in both paperback and eBook versions!

It was an interesting journey writing this book. It took two years to write during 2012 to 2014. Like most first-time authors, the largest problem was staying motivated to write. This is where another VGEC Annual Conference came into play. Before I left for the 27th VGEC Conference in Burlington, Ontario last fall, I sent all of the final materials to my publisher. When I arrived home, the book was waiting for my approval before going to print. As it entered into print some have asked if I would write another. There is a hint in one of the chapters as to what the next book would be if it were written.

It is not an exaggeration to say that attending several VGEC annual conferences has punctuated my growth within and given great substance to my verger ministry. It certainly seems that God led me to the VGEC, to the verger ministry and to putting my thoughts and experiences into a form which, prayerfully, will be beneficial to young people everywhere.

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



Abstract: VGEC Annual Conferences marked two very important milestones in the life of the Verger of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church, the Bronx, New York, Sandy Burrell. After 25 years serving as an acolyte, under several influential mentors, he became the church's verger. Then a ground-swell of sentiment and opinion energized him to write a book designed to, "... spark the conversation that motivates the youth and maybe empowers them to take on responsibilities and not feel intimidated."

Posted by [Ken Holloway](#) at 1:19 PM



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- [2005 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2004 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2003 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2002 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2001 VGEC Archives](#)
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