



# The Vergers Voice

*The news blog of the Vergers Guild*

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Friday, June 30, 2017

## Tales from the Slype: The Power of Prayer



David Deutsch in the Slype at the Washington National Cathedral preparing for Evening Prayer

By [David Deutsch](#), Volunteer Verger at the Washington National Cathedral, [dsd@his.com](mailto:dsd@his.com)

*I began as a volunteer verger at the [Washington National Cathedral](#) in July of 2003. Over the course of my time, I had certain epiphanies that, among other results, told me that this great stone edifice which can look cold and imposing on the outside, actually has a warm heart and vibrant spirit. When I am at the cathedral, I hang out in the [slype](#). Now a slype in medieval times was a covered passageway between the dean's office and the nave, giving the head of the cathedral easy access to the services. At the Washington National Cathedral, the slype is comfortably furnished, has storage for vestments, the service books, etc. The slype is both a control tower and hanger for worship.*

On a July evening in 2005 I am finishing the service of Evening Prayer in the War Memorial Chapel at the Washington National Cathedral. Evening Prayer is a normal duty for the verger during the late spring and summer with the cathedral schools out and the choristers celebrating summer. Evensong becomes Evening Prayer until the middle of September.

Concluding with, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all evermore. Amen," I place my Book of Common Prayer on the low altar rail, snuff out the candles, and walk to the back to greet the congregation.

The last are two men—one looking exceedingly pale and ill. The healthy one asks me to say a prayer for his friend who has a brain tumor and will be facing surgery the next day. I panic. In a billionth of a second the following thoughts race through my mind:

- I am not ordained clergy, I can't pray (never mind I had just finished the Office of Evening Prayer)

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- I left my Book of Common Prayer on the altar rail. It would be lame to go get it...
- Is there no one else around to do this?
- I don't know what to say

Then I begin, "Let us pray..." From somewhere the words come forth. When I finish I look up. Both men have tears running down their cheeks. I am overwhelmed. We say goodbye. I leave for the slype to fill in and sign the service book, doing "vergerish" duties preparatory to going home.

It is 2017, and I am still overwhelmed as I look back on that summer evening in 2005 when I truly experienced the awesome power of prayer.

*And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. Amen.*

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The 2017 VGEC Annual Conference will take place in Atlanta, Georgia from October 12th through October 15th. We hope you can join us! Click the big red button to register today. You can also [read more about the conference](#) and [book your hotel](#).



*Editors note: Send ideas for **Vergers Voice** topics to [ideas@vergersvoice.org](mailto:ideas@vergersvoice.org)*

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*Abstract: Volunteer Verger David Deutsch from Washington National Cathedral begins a series of Vergers Voice blog posts entitled, "Tales from the Slype." In this inaugural installment, David discovers the power of prayer first-hand after Evening Prayer way back in 2005. The memory remains vivid and strong in David's mind. Have you have had a similar experience in your ministry?*

Posted by [Scott Smith](#) at [7:50 AM](#)



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