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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.

For information about submitting news and announcements to the blog, click [HERE](#). Contact news@vergers.org for help.

Friday, July 21, 2017

How does the Vergers Voice blog work?



The [Vergers Voice](#) in the old days was a lot harder to distribute than today, but it may have been a lot more fun!
Photo credit <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/23427/newspaper-delivery-boys-on-bikes>

By Scott Smith, VGEC President and Vergers Voice Publisher, scott@vergers.org

We want to take a step back and think about the Vergers Voice, the history, where it is, and where it's headed with these questions:

- Where did the Vergers Voice come from?
- How does the blog work and who makes it happen each week?
- What are the best types of posts?
- Are there vergers out there who would like to help with the blog?

Where did the Vergers Voice come from?

When the guild started in the late 1980's, [the very first newsletter](#) about vergers in North America was produced and mailed by Bill Gleason in May, 1988. As the first president of the VGEC, Bill was also the first editor and it evolved from "The News and Information Bulletin" to "The President's Memo" in 1989 and to "The President's Verge" in August 1991. In 1993, the VGEC newsletters stopped and were followed by one issue of "The President's Agenda" in 1994. In April 1995, "On the Verge" made its debut followed by the inaugural issue of the "Vergers Voice" in February 1996. It's interesting to notice how much that first issue from twenty-one years ago looks like our current blog!

About the newsletters, Bill recently said, "They have always been a total labor of love with many, many people involved over the years. In the early days, I used scissors and glue and tape to put

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Past issues of the Printed Vergers Voice

- [2010 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2009 VGEC Archives](#)

the things together and we put them in envelopes and mailed them from our house. The challenge was always getting people to contribute material for the newsletter, keeping people motivated to keep it going, and to lead the massive effort. I'm sure that's the main issue with the blog today!"

In 2008, Margaret McLarty published one of the [last old-style Vergers Voice](#) newsletters and in 2009 helped launch a series of electronic news blasts called "[V-Happenings](#)" that was the birth of the current blog. The very [last paper copy](#) of the newsletter was printed in July 2010.

In 2012, Ken Holloway volunteered to help start the current blog. He recently said, "The June 2012 V-Happenings asked for help with communications and since I had a lot of experience with writing and publishing, I volunteered. We quickly started building the process for the blog and the [first stories I wrote](#) centered on the VGEC Annual Conference in 2012. Over the years, we settled on a weekly blog publishing process in which Scott Smith came up with the topics, I wrote the blog and edited a photo for the headline, then passed the draft to Eileen Hicks as our editor, who, in turn polished the piece and passed it back to Scott for final approval and publishing. Later, we engaged Michael Sanchez to be the final "push-the-button-to-publish" guy.

In 2016, Ken stepped down from regular work on the blog to spend more time as the care-giver to his wife Margaret.

How does the blog work and who makes it happen each week?

Today, the blog is hosted on [Blogger](#) which is one of the most popular blogging platforms available. Scott, Eileen, and Michel continue in their roles with the weekly production of the blog. Because we live almost 1,000 miles apart and are in three different time zones, we use a lot of technology to keep the process running. We use [Trello](#) as a project management tool which helps keep us on schedule and focused on the topic of the week and upcoming topics. Trello has helped us build a rich [pipeline of posts](#) that gives us great visibility into active and future potential topics ideas. Each post has a [checklist to keep us coordinated](#) and on track. Everyone in the system is alerted every time someone checks off a task. We stay in touch 100% by [iMessage and SMS texting](#). Michael will tell you how much he loves getting texts at 5am when it's 7am and 8am elsewhere!

When asked about the process, Eileen said, "Compared other collaboration tools that I use, I love the flexibility of Trello. It's very visual but it uses words, too! It seems perfect for verger type to-do lists, checklists, etc but you can also easily attach items and comment on anything. I use it mostly on my laptop but the mobile app is also very usable."

Michael added, "I'm really happy with how the blog has progressed from the early days. There are so many moving parts to putting out a weekly blog, and like anything else, there was a learning curve when we started it. In the old days, we used an E-Mail system from a company called Emma. At the time, it was what the guild needed. However, as we grew and technology became more of a tool and necessity, it became clear that from a back end perspective, it wasn't going to be something we could continue with. There were other services that could offer more features (which made me happy) and at a much more competitive price (which almost made Treasurer Duke DuTeil crack a smile). Now we're using MailChimp, and it's been a wonderful tool. They are constantly adding new features that make my job as "E-Mailer-in-Chief" easier. As we continue to grow, we'll have an E-Mail system that'll grow with us. As I mentioned earlier, it's not something that is always visible from the membership side, but from behind the scenes, it's a most wonderful tool!"

What are the best types of posts?

We recently performed a [Survey Monkey](#) poll of all members of the VGEC to see how everyone is using the blog and what types of posts they think are the best. Here are some highlights from the poll:

- 45% read every article, 47% read it occasionally
- Over 90% think the blog is a good way to disseminate information about the verger ministry
- On a scale of 1-5, the blog gets 4.09 rating: we'll take it! Thank you!
- The 3 most popular topic areas are:
 - Reflections about the ministry
 - How-to articles
 - Articles profiling people/places/organizations

Take a moment to [review all of the poll results](#) if you are interested in more information.

Are there vergers out there who would like to help with the blog?

The answer to this question is a resounding **YES!** We have recently had several posts provided by various members and we're pleased to see that those articles are some of our most popular. Members who have been helping are David Deutsch, John Whitaker, John Campbell, Chuck Dale, David Jette, Duke DuTeil.

- [2008 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2007 VGEC Archives](#)
- [2006 VGEC Archives](#)
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In the poll, we asked, "Would you be interested in helping with the blog? If so, how?" **The good news is** that we got these excellent responses:

- Writing an article on occasion: 36
- Copy editing: 12
- Finding story leads: 3
- HTML: 1 (only one nerd out there???)

The bad news is that the poll was blind and we cannot contact those members!

If you are interested, please contact us at ideas@vergersvoice.org and let's get moving on making the Vergers Voice blog better and better. Just remember if you answered "yes" in the poll, we cannot contact you if you do not send us an email.

In conclusion, Eileen says, "The blog needs more writers! As vergers many of us can write a customary but the blog needs to be a bit more creative. I know there are vergers out there who are writing interesting observations of our humanity as vergers. Share your thoughts with us. The blog is your online newsletter, saving trees, but still binding us as a community of vergers."

This is the number one thing that we hope to do with the blog over the coming weeks, months, and years - encourage members to participate who are interested in creative writing and exploring and relating personal stories about the verger ministry.

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*

Abstract: In today's edition of the Vergers Voice blog, we look at the evolution of the blog starting back from its humble paper newsletter days to the lean, mean electronic machine we have today. Also, reader feedback and an open call to the readership for writing, editing, and HTML help.

Posted by [Scott Smith](#) at [3:55 PM](#)



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