



# 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](#) or contact [ideas@vergervoice.org](mailto:ideas@vergervoice.org).

Friday, September 15, 2017

## A Verger without a Chimere and Virge is — a Verger!



How often do you use a [virge](#) and a [chimere](#) when you are a [verger](#) in a small parish?

### Verging in a Small Parish

by [Joseph John, St. James' Episcopal Church, Pewee Valley, Kentucky, joseph.r.john@me.com](#)

Is there really a difference between verging in a large church versus a small church?

**YES. NO. MAYBE.**

What a cop out response.

However, let me first say "Ahh!"

Ahh, yes, the chimere, the virge, the procession down the aisle. Yes, that's just one of the enjoyable "perks" of being a verger.

However...forget the Ahh!, the vestments and the "stick" (or virge), for a moment. I believe the role of being a verger is directly related to the size of the church, plus the history of the church's liturgical processes, plus the season of the year, plus the pre-disposition of your rector towards liturgical processes and verger involvement — always keeping in mind that the verger serves at the pleasure of the Rector, Vicar, or Priest-in-Charge, or the Senior Warden.

In other words, a verger in a small parish with an average Sunday attendance of 75 or less may or may not be vesting and processing on a regular basis. So be it.

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### Past issues of the Printed Vergers Voice

- [2010 VGEC Archives](#)

Let's begin with the baseline of responsibilities for the verger — large or small church. An excerpt from the [vergers.org](http://www.vergers.org) web site entitled "The Verger Today":

*The verger's logistical and behind the scenes support allow the clergy more time for pastoral and sacramental responsibilities. We often say that every parish has a verger whether or not they are identified as such. Some typical verger duties are assigning, training and checking in lectors, chalice bearers, acolytes and prayer intercessors. The verger often coordinates with the altar guild and funeral guild. In some parishes the verger checks lighting and sound.*

*The precise duties of the verger will be specific to each parish church. For instance, in some parishes the verger will process at all liturgies and in others, they only process on Feast or Festival days. Especially helpful with visiting clergy or special services, the verger checks on additional seating, hospitality and welcoming newcomers. Most parishes, either small or large, and clergy who incorporate the verger position, wonder how they ever did without vergers!*

Indeed, we as vergers are very busy; however, I think the small parish verger is even busier simply because there aren't a lot of people to divvy up responsibilities — there's just ONE of me. No other bodies — no delegation of responsibilities. With the benefits of delegation being lessened dramatically, there is more "doing" and "git 'er done" required of the verger. Small church vs. large church is simply the difference of having bodies or critical mass to accomplish the many jobs a verger typically performs in any parish.

Yes, for the small parish verger, there is less pomp-and-circumstance and more behind-the-scenes work. He/she is working with the Altar Guild, the Worship Committee, the organist, the Parish Administrator, ushers, acolytes, Episcopal Church Women, and more.

Speaking of acolytes, invariably, there are fewer acolytes in the small parish, which then increases the challenges of training and scheduling around Mom and Dad's busy Sunday, weekend, and vacation schedules. Oh, my, there are countless times that I believe that it's a lot easier to herd cats or bishops.

Structure and attention to detail is Rule #1 for any verger, and Rule #1 is critical in the small parish. He/she must be organized and focused since there is always a bunch of running back-and-forth to ensure that the "show" goes on — without a hitch. Again, rarely is there anyone present to whom responsibilities can be delegated.

Rule #2 is flexibility. The verger has to be flexible for there will be changes during the liturgy that weren't planned and so, the verger must accept the fact that every Sunday is "live theater" and thus, things change very quickly. Let's face it — the verger is a stage manager for the liturgical services.

I mentioned more personal "doing" rather than "delegating"; well, the small church many times lacks a sexton, and so the verger in the small church will often be responsible for opening the church, the parish hall, and all of the "locked doors" that need to be opened for easy access to the services.

Are there other challenges to the small parish verger? Oh, yes. A major challenge is the small parish that lacks a full-time rector. A verger in a situation like this becomes a major asset to the Vestry and the Search Committee as he/she keeps the Sunday services flowing while working with supply priests — one less thing the Senior Warden and the Vestry has to worry about.

The verger greets the supply priest, makes all the necessary introductions to those who will be involved in the liturgy that day. He/she reviews the liturgical processes for all services that should have been prepared by the verger and emailed to the priest earlier in the week.

And then the "stage manager" does a sound check, checks the lavalier and shows the priest where to vest, the all-important location of the bathrooms and, of course, the freshly brewed coffee. And the list continues.

Well, all the responsibilities I've listed in this article come as no surprise to vergers throughout our churches. It's really more of a "there's ONE of me" in the small church as compared to "there's more of me's" in the large church.

So is there really a difference between verging in a large church versus a small church?

**YES. NO. MAYBE.**

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Did you know that you can submit your own story about the verger ministry for possible inclusion in the [Vergers Voice](http://www.vergersvoice.org) blog?

We are always looking for interesting topics, ideas, and creative ways of demonstrating the power and enjoyment of being part of the fellowship of the VGEC and our ministry of service.

If you have any ideas, or if you would like to take your turn at writing a post and sharing ideas,

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The [2017 VGEC Annual Conference](#) in Atlanta is coming very soon on October 12th to October 15th. Registration is **\$275.00** per person. The deadline to [register](#) is **Monday, October 2, 2017**. **We cannot accept on-site registrations!**



*Abstract: Recently, vergersvoice.org asked the members of the Vergers Guild to consider submitting ideas and manuscripts for the blog. This post was submitted by Joseph John, a verger in a small church, average Sunday attendance of 73, in Kentucky. See if you agree with his summation of the difference between verging in small and large churches.*

Posted by [Scott Smith](#) at [10:51 AM](#)



## 1 comment:



[Geoff Brown](#) September 18, 2017 at 7:44 AM

Thanks so much for writing this post!! As the (first-ever) verger of an even smaller church (ASA around 60), I'd have to say that you certainly touched all the high points. One thing I'd add is ensuring that the requisite "second unrelated adult" is present for the Sunday School -- and being that second unrelated adult until one shows up. There's a benefit here: I get to know the kids and managing them as acolytes is easier. Perhaps the "during the week" stuff -- I also do the weekly parish e-mail, along with reminder e-mails for those schedule to serve, as well, not to mention compiling the quarterly rota of those scheduled to serve (which actually makes the whole thing a relatively seamless process), but which adds scheduling the counters, the flower guild, the altar guild, the readers, and the ushers to the chalcists and acolytes. I vest and process infrequently enough that it's never seemed necessary to replace the mace we acquired through the diocesan used liturgical gear exchange with a proper virge. Do I envy the "big church" vergers? Well, after Christmas this year I will (check your liturgical calendar if that seems cryptic -- this year we'll have five services in two days and only one verger).

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