

Fall 2008 Province IV Kanuga Speaker: BECCA STEVENS

Chaplain, St. Augustine's Chapel, Vanderbilt Campus

An excerpt from Becca's latest book, Hither and Yon: A Travel Guide for the Spiritual Journey:

One gift of my inability to hang on to things is that my family doesn't have a key to our house. The door is always open. Though we have had three cars stolen from the driveway, no one has ever entered the house unless invited. I think the reason is that people are always around. We have home church every week, and our children have friends over all the time to skateboard or play. My husband writes most of his music in our front room, and people are meeting and working around the house almost every day. The unplanned result is that community has replaced the security system. Whatever we have in our house is shared with anyone who walks through the door.

Becca Stevens is a writer and Episcopal priest whose concept of community is something she lives and shares every day. Whether it be with the eclectic congregation of St. Augustine's Chapel on Vanderbilt University, or with the women of Magdalene, an organization she founded to help women with a criminal history of prostitution and drug addiction, or with the growing friends she is making in far-off places through her books, blog, traveling and speaking engagements, Becca believes deeply that community is something to be nurtured through love, justice, and open doors. Becca is also a Daughter of the King and a previous speaker at our Province IV Summer Retreat.

With an Episcopal priest as a father and a mother who directed an outreach center for senior citizens and low-income children, Becca was given the legacy of service through parents who, in her words, "lived generously and didn't make a fuss about it." Asked about her parents, Becca responds, "My dad was killed by a drunk driver in the fall of 1968, but he left me a legacy to not only give to those who are in need, but to do it generously. His tragic death has reminded me that life is tender and precious." Becca's mom, who died suddenly 10 years ago, was highly regarded in the community for her compassion, hard work and practical approach to service. Says Becca, "My mom raised five children on her own after my dad died, all the while running St. Luke's Community Center. She taught us to share, forgive, appreciate the gifts of nature, and to be our brother's keeper - and that there is always time to make crafts and play. As a leader she was also an amazing example that sometimes you have to just take it on the chin and keep going."

This commitment to generously serve, with little fuss, has helped Becca, with generous support from the community, establish a partnership between St. Augustine's Chapel and San Eduardo in Ecuador to build and support a rural school; support a nursing program for an AIDS hospice in Botswana; and recently establish a center for contemplative justice that houses programs such as a chapter of Mobile Loaves & Fishes, which serves the homeless population in Nashville. To date, Rev. Stevens has raised over \$9 million for the organizations she supports. Becca has won numerous awards such as the Frist Foundation's award for 'Innovation in Action,' the Academy of Women in Achievement, the 'Alumnus of the Year' from University of the South's School of Theology and 'Tennessean of the Year' by The Tennessean in 2005. In addition to numerous articles, Becca has written three books for Abingdon Press; Sanctuary, her last book, was one of Christianity Today's Top 5 Spiritual Books of 2005. Her newest book, Hither & Yon: A Travel Guide for the Spiritual Journey, was released fall 2007.

Becca resides in Nashville with her husband, Grammy-winning songwriter, Marcus Hummon, and their three sons, Levi, Caney and Moses.