



### About the Author

Russ Allen was born and raised in Connecticut, educated at Bard College, the General Theological Seminary and Northern Michigan University, and served in parish, academic, ecumenical and executive ministries in seven states. He and Louisa, his wife of 50 years, moved to Cape Cod in 2006. They have two grown children and five grandchildren. If you would like to discuss his book project, please contact him at [revrussallen@comcast.net](mailto:revrussallen@comcast.net).

### About Vintage Voice

Vintage Voice is a monthly publication for retirees of the Episcopal Church who, in sharing their stories, help deepen the sense of community. We hope you enjoy these articles and find them helpful. Articles are published with the authors' permission. If you have a reflection about your life in retirement, consider writing for the Vintage Voice! Send your submissions to [vintagevoice@cpg.org](mailto:vintagevoice@cpg.org).

# VINTAGE VOICE



## From Sunday Sermons to Sunday Columns My Second Career as a Journalist

By the Rev. Russell H. Allen

On September 6, 2012, the *Cape Cod Chronicle* published my first “You Gussed It” column. The piece was on why I had been volunteering for the Marine Mammal Rescue and Research program of IFAW, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, an organization that “supports dedicated teams of highly trained individuals committed to promoting the conservation of marine mammal species (dolphins, whales, porpoises, and seals) and their habitats.”

Two years later, on September 4, 2014, my first “Discovering Harwich” column was published. Since then, I have written that column every month. Also for the *Chronicle*, I’ve written Personality Features along with other features and articles, and even two columns for the *Cape Cod Times*, “Matters of Faith” and “My View.”

In March, my work as a journalist will expand further when I report on an event for the benefit of local farmers, hosted by the Harwich Conservation Trust.

How did I become a journalist after a life in ministry? I was born and raised in Connecticut, where I am canonically resident, and a lifelong Episcopalian. I graduated from Bard College and the General Theological Seminary before being made a Deacon in June 1968 and ordained a Priest in May 1969.

For 48 years, in seven different states, I served in parish, ecumenical and denominational college chaplaincy and executive ministry positions, earning a master’s degree in history from Northern Michigan University along the way. I retired in June 2006 and relocated to Cape Cod where I continued my active ministry as an Associate Clergy at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Osterville for 10 years before having to leave that position.

The abrupt end to my Priestly Ministry left me feeling adrift in a boat without a motor, sail, or even oars. For a while I worked as a cashier

in a local grocery store, but left for health reasons. By then, the foundation had been laid for what has become my second career.

Though writing had always been a part of my professional life, for the most part it was limited to in-house publications and my master's thesis, *The Episcopal Church and Conscientious Objection during World War II*. I actually stopped writing my sermons altogether several years before retiring, preferring instead to preach without manuscript or notes, believing that the Holy Spirit would not fail me come Sunday morning. This faith has carried over into my journalism. At least so far, She has always suggested a topic for my next column and the right interview question or approach for my next article.

As I was leaving St. Peter's, I was encouraged to become a freelance journalist by two persons: my son Josh, himself a freelance reporter, and Tim Wood, the husband of my acupuncturist who is the Managing Editor of the *Cape Cod Chronicle*. Early on, the *Cape Cod Times* published occasional Letters to the Editor and "My View" columns, mostly focused on the social issue of gun violence or the meaning of national holidays. Eventually, I was invited to write regular Matters of Faith pieces for its Sunday edition. In time, the support I received expanded to other *Chronicle* staff members to the point that most weekly editions of the paper carried items with my byline.

I am so grateful for the opportunities that my second career as a journalist and author have brought me. My words are read by far more people than ever heard me preach. I have met so many fascinating people who have widened my experience and deepened my knowledge and understanding. Each column and article are opportunities for me to share what I have learned as well as to articulate my worldview.

They allow me to celebrate the joys of living on Cape Cod, and explore the challenges, especially for its year-round, often less-wealthy residents. One of my best-received Discovering Harwich columns was one that offered ten rules for grocery shopping from the point of view of the workers who receive minimum wage for their often-unappreciated labor.

I can feel anxious at the outset of an assignment, but that quickly gives way to the confidence with which I interview subjects, research topics, draft, revise and edit and rewrite, and finally submit the column or article for publication.

Today, while I continue to write for the *Chronicle* and the *Times*, I have taken on my largest project to date, the writing of a book titled, הרב ישוע בן יוסף *Rabboni Yeshua Ben Yosef: A Biography*. This will involve a lot of work and require a major commitment to see a manuscript to its completion. I am sure it will take at least until the end of 2020.

My goal is to place the story in its original context of Hebrew culture, history, theology and religious tradition, to fill in the numerous blanks and discover what really happened based on a logical analysis and creative imagination. I want the participants, their lives, joys, sorrows, struggles, and resolutions to be authentic and real.

Being a published journalist has become my new ministry. Completing my book will require fortitude, focus, patience, determination, the support of my family and friends, and the continuing guidance of the Holy Spirit.



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