



# Becca Stevens

*hither and yon*



## About Becca

An excerpt from *hither and yon*:

*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.



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, 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 and Yon: A Travel Guide for the Spiritual Journey*, releases fall 2007.

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

 Blog - [beccastevens.org](http://beccastevens.org)



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## Endorsements for *hither and yon*

*Becca Stevens is a very highly gifted priest, a writer and poet who loves the world and loves the people to whom she ministers. Those who know her know of the wellspring of hope that she has brought to all those she touches. Here she draws from her deeply moving stories to share in a powerful way her absolute confidence in the redemptive love of God that is the source of her own boundless love for the world and its people.*

**Joseph C. Hough, Jr., President, Union Theological Seminary**

*Becca Steven's writing is poetic; her ministry is extraordinary. This new Travel Guide for the Spirit is a gift that will change lives.*

**Governor Phil Bredesen, State of Tennessee**

*Becca's stories and insights offer us a comforting reminder that God is to be found Here, There and Everywhere.*

**John Prine, Songwriter/Artist**

## Excerpts from *hither and yon*

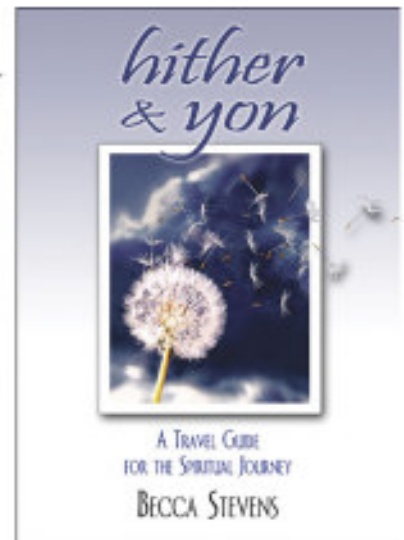
*I walked on a trail in November. The fall had been late in coming, and I had almost stopped looking for the trees to change. October had been dry, and so it made sense that the fall had been less than spectacular. As I walked, something sparkled on the periphery of my vision; and I turned my head to see what it was. There, suspended among the leaves, was a spider web glistening in the sunlight. The web was a tatted masterpiece. I almost couldn't see the leaves for that web; but then they, too, came into focus, and I saw the star-shaped leaves of the gum tree making a gorgeous pattern around the web. I almost couldn't see the trees for the leaves, but then I noticed the golden auras of those trees standing tall and holy. I almost couldn't see the forest for the trees, but then I stepped back a little and took it all in. In that moment the forest became an ode to the last days of fall, and I wanted to hold it like a wilting bouquet. I almost couldn't see the owl for the forest; but then I spotted him staring at me, awake and perched in the middle of that glorious day. The owl is a sign for wisdom, so I sat and watched him to see if he would offer me an insight. And so I almost couldn't see the sky for the owl, but then I finally lifted my head up and saw all the hues of the rainbow blended into the clear expanse. I almost couldn't see God for the beauty of that sky; but when I finally did, I felt at peace and thought that if I died later that day I would recognize heaven. Then I went back to see the web, but the sun in the heavens had moved so the web had become invisible. I couldn't see the spider for God.*

*In our walk, we are called to dance the old dance together and to persevere. We are called to dance until we bore the politics out of church. To dance until we forget resentments and the need to control. To dance until fear subsides and war is over and impotency is forgotten. To dance until pride loses track and sickness scars over. To dance until the prison walls fall into a river of reconciliation and wholeness. To dance until all that remains is the desire to preach love and to surrender. To dance until the ground feels nothing but fertile and acceptance and truth become a way of life. To dance slowly and steadily until the drums are part of our hearts and we know what praying ceaselessly means. To dance until all that remains is love.*

*Prayer is one of the most intimate experiences we have, and so there can't be a single language that works for all people...It is as private as the way we kiss someone we love.*

*We don't have to surrender to our fear; we surrender to love, and love will move our fears aside.*

*We are not called to go out and change the world. We are only called to go out and love the world and change ourselves to love more fully.*



*Blog - [beccastevens.org](http://beccastevens.org)*



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## Fast Facts

- Has written three books for Abingdon Press. Her second book, *Sanctuary*, was one of *Christianity Today's* Top 5 Spiritual Books of 2005. Her latest, *Hither and Yon: A Travel Guide For the Spiritual Journey*, releases September 2007.
- Founded Magdalene, a residential community for women with a criminal history of prostitution and drug addiction. Success rate of women who stay clean and are meaningfully employed for two and a half years is approximately 75 percent. Sister communities in Charleston, Chattanooga and North Carolina have recently been formed.
- Has raised more than \$9 million for the various organizations she oversees.
- Was named University of the South School of Theology 'Alumnus of the Year' in 2005. Was also named 'Nashvillian of the Year' by *The Nashville Scene*, 'A Tennessean of the Year' by *The Tennessean* and, with Magdalene, has received the Frist Foundation's award for 'Innovation in Action.'
- Married to Marcus Hummon, Grammy-award winning songwriter. Marcus has penned numerous hits, including the Grammy-winning song *Bless the Broken Road*. Marcus has worked and written with numerous top artists including the Dixie Chicks, Rascal Flatts, Sara Evans and Tim McGraw. As a playwright, Marcus' credits include *Atlanta*, premiering at the Geffen Theatre in Los Angeles this fall, *Piper* and *American Duet* playing in New York musical festivals this fall, as well as an opera to be featured at The Lincoln Center as part of their 2008 new works program.

## Partial List of Speaking Engagements

**Virginia Theological Seminary**

**Vanderbilt University**

**Sewanee, University of the South**

**Belmont University**

**Converse College**

**HCA Corporation**

**Junior League National Conference**

**Tennessee Labor Management Association**

**National Conference for Private School Educators**

**Tennessee Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**

**Net Impact Conference, *Building a Sustainable Future***

**Southeast Lutheran Women's Conference**

**Christ Church United Methodist Church, New York**

**St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Atlanta**

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## Becca's Organizations

### St. Augustine's Chapel

Becca serves as Chaplain of St. Augustine's Chapel at Vanderbilt University. This eclectic and growing congregation of students, faculty, musicians, writers, artists and community members see ecumenism and service as an integral part of their faith.

### Magdalene

In 1996, Becca founded Magdalene to serve women with a criminal history of drug abuse and prostitution. Magdalene stands as a witness to the truth that in the end, love and grace are more powerful than all the forces that drive women to the streets. Women are invited to stay up to two years in one of the five houses that serve as sanctuaries. Magdalene receives no federal or state funding and relies solely on the gifts from the community as well as income generated from grants, the School for Johns and Thistle Farms, Magdalene's cottage business.

### Thistle Farms

Thistle Farms is the 'for-profit' national arm of Magdalene. Named for the wildflower that grows on the road Nashville prostitutes frequent, Thistle Farms' natural bath and body care products are handmade by the residents of Magdalene. Thistle Farms is distributed in boutique stores nationwide and through hundreds of home parties. A roster of corporate clients includes Ingram Industries and J Jill, the national women's retailer.

### Escuela Anne Stevens, San Eduardo, Ecuador

Named in honor of Becca's mother, Anne Stevens, the school was founded when the first group from St. Augustine's went to San Eduardo 10 years ago. The school started with one teacher and 10 students and now employs six full-time teachers with 110 students grades K-7. Escuela Anne Stevens is accredited by the government, and recently added a computer lab. In order to better support the needs of the community, St. Augustine's makes an annual trip to help with capital improvement projects and operation of a medical clinic.

### Partnership with Holy Cross AIDS Hospice, Botswana

Holy Cross Hospice in Gaborone, Botswana, is a small, courageous clinic serving the HIV/AIDS population in Gaborone, Botswana, with whom Becca and St. Augustine's Chapel have established an ongoing relationship. Money raised to support the hospice goes for operating costs, for sponsorship of volunteers to work at the hospice and to create an exchange program with the hospice.

## Contact Information

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*Blog - [beccastevens.org](http://beccastevens.org)*