

## Rev. Tom Martinez Engages in Photography Ministry

Creativity and Spirituality are interconnected in how they evoke emotion and humanity within us. It has been a wonderful journey to incorporate my creative spirit into my ministry at All Souls Bethlehem church in Brooklyn. I'm fortunate to be serving a community of faith that's open to the arts. My church has supported my passion for photography. We routinely incorporate slide shows to music in our Sunday morning worship service, along with "film texts" from major motion pictures. It is wonderful to watch my parishioners moved by my photos and making the connections between my sermon and the images I provide in church. Since Social Justice is a huge part of the work I do, showing slide shows of the protests and peace marches I attend is a great way to keep my parishioners involved and updated on my ministry even if they can not make the protests themselves. I've even started photographing our worship services themselves. This past week my new associate minister Rev. Matthew Davis Fox led us in an Ostara related seed planting ritual.



*Rev. Matthew Fox leads an Ostara ritual with ASBC minister of music, Terris Krueger (left) and ASBC parishioner and former Council President June Kowal taking part.*

One of the things I learned about myself back when I did my psychological testing for the ministry was that I scored high in the artist category on one of the tests. At the time this surprised me, until I experienced a storm of creativity around poetry. A year later I discovered photography, thanks to my sister Linda. I was visiting her and her partner, Mary, on Vashon Island (outside Seattle) and she showed me a slide show she had put together with some images she captured using a Fuji E550, a beautiful little camera. I was so moved by the slide show, I bought the same camera. As Joseph Campbell, "Follow your bliss and the doors will open." And they are. That was two years and roughly 50,000 images ago. Now I'm shooting with a Canon 5 D. I mostly shoot life in the New York City and the surrounding boroughs, capturing the humanity and compassion of every day moments that are at the heart of my spiritual journey. I do my best to witness the beauty of the people I encounter, including other artists at work (mostly musicians and performance poets), protests, and all kinds of religious events.

One of the first pictures that really opened my eyes to the power of photography was of an angel on the grounds of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Manhattan's upper west side.



*Sculpture on the grounds of St. John the Divine.*

I also like to shoot over at Vox Pop (Latin for Voice of the People). It's a funky little coffee shop in our Kensington neighborhood that share's our church's love of the arts. Musicians who perform at Vox Pop have been known to play at church for us, and sometimes folks from All Souls Bethlehem Church play over at Vox Pop (including our Associate Minister, Matthew Fox).



*Rev. Matthew Fox and his musical partner performing folk music at Vox Pop.*



*All Souls Bethlehem parishioner, singer songwriter Tom Peters, at Vox Pop.*

My dual-role as a photographer and minister has enabled me to witness and capture certain things I might not have otherwise seen, such as these images from New Orleans.



*The 9<sup>th</sup> Ward in New Orleans as seen from a bus during a PICO sponsored trip for clergy desiring to witness the devastation first hand.*



*Destroyed remains of a home in the 9<sup>th</sup> Ward.*

I make it a point to photograph protests. This next shot was taken on Monday, March 19<sup>th</sup> during a protest calling attention to the 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the US invasion of Iraq.



*An activist calls attention to Halliburton's wartime profiteering (New York City, March 2007).*

Along with the need to witness the kind of courage exhibited by those who speak out, I feel compelled to witness the beauty of creation. In that spirit, I've photographed the hawks who were recently relocated from Prospect Park to Greenwood Cemetery (both in Brooklyn).



*Hawk in Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn NY.*

I am always looking for ways to expand and combine my ministry with my photographic journey. People interested in my photos often ask about my church and vice –versa. Recently, my photos have appeared in the Brooklyn Eagle and Park Slope Reader and I will continue to pursue free-lance work. Additional photos can be seen at: [www.digitalrailroad.net/witness](http://www.digitalrailroad.net/witness). You can read more about All Souls Bethlehem Church at [www.asbc.org](http://www.asbc.org).

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