

*From the Rev. George Ham:*

Six years ago, I became involved with a congregation that, a week prior to my arrival, had lost its rector due to declining church finances. Subsequently, I did things a deacon doesn't sign up for, never expected to do and sometimes arguably had no business doing. But I did them as well as I could, while preaching Baptismal Ministry and encouraging discernment and commitment. That church, St. John's in St. Cloud, is now preparing to commission a nine-person Shared Ministry Cohort. Thanks be to God! Now I hope to do the thing that has eluded me, and that is simply to show up and be a deacon, the servant minister who finds God at work in the community and enlists the Church to go out and be God's hands and feet and make a difference. How I hope to accomplish that is addressed in my most recent e-News column, condensed for you here --The great stage musical *Guys and Dolls* has underworld stooge Nicely-Nicely Johnson, stand up at a mandatory street church meeting and confess his "sin" of livening up some folks traveling together on a boat to heaven in the show-stopper song *Sit Down, You're Rocking the Boat*. I love that song. In a moment, you can hear and see it enthusiastically performed by a Broadway cast. But first a warning: Like the parables of Jesus, the song is not what it seems. Like Jesus's message that "the last will be first" this song exposes misguided righteousness that stifles peoples' understanding of God's kingdom and God's greatest commandment. This song is in fact an order to "Get up, get up, start rocking the boat!" Sometimes, boats need to be rocked. Now, if ever, is one of those times. We are bombarded with conflicting reports of COVID cures, federal riot storm troopers, mandated school re-openings, election postponements, and pent-up resentment and opposition to whatever "the other party" claims is true. Yet we know the Church is supposed to be the rock of stability and reason, the repository of truth, justice and healing, of ethics and morality. But it seems like a "perfect storm" is trying to silence the Church, sequester it inside its own empty house and prevent it from telling us that our grade-school nostalgia for what we have always been told was a better time is keeping us from seeing the honest truth. We have allowed ourselves to become complacent in many of the things we stand for. The good news is, we have the tools to fix the boat, turn it into the wind and be seen and heard by our community proclaiming real truth, real justice, and real healing. God help us to do the work you have intended for us to do. God help us to Rock this Boat! I hope you will take four minutes now and enjoy an incredible performance of *Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat* from the 2016 *Oliver Awards* -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3rmAme3WciA>