



## Becca Stevens

Visionary, Dreamer, Priest. Organizer, Chaplain, Preacher, Writer, Inspirer. Your creative practical, political, and theological work has educated the public about the reality of prostitution, has transformed the lives of women trapped in trafficking, addiction, and desperation, and demonstrates the power of the gospel in the world.

Impelled by your own experience with loss and betrayal as a child, you were drawn to the ministry with the company of your late father's beat up old Book of Common Prayer. Your seeking led you to pursue ordination in the Episcopal Church and to live out a unique (a word often used, but rarely true) ministry.

With degrees from University of the South and Vanderbilt Divinity School, you serve as Chaplain at St. Augustine's Chapel at Vanderbilt University. In 1997 compelled thier suffering, you offered a home to five women who had been victims of sex-trafficking. With no authority and centered on love, the house was a sanctuary where healing would happen. That home became Magdalene, where women receive two years of free housing, therapy, medical care, education and employment. These women operate and manage Thistle Farms, a social enterprise that makes and sells natural bath andbody products. Magdalene, Thistle Farms, and the projects that are generated from it, have become a global movement of healing and redemption.

A story teller with a sixth sense for metaphor, such as the ordinary, overlooked thistle holding secret beauty, your ministry of preaching and teaching has moved many to risk saying yes to their own urge toward justice and to ally with others in actions of love. Author of ten books, you have written about grief, spirituality, life on the farm, and the violent history of the tea industry. The title of your latest book summarizes your philosophy of creating a better world: 'Love Heals'.

You have said, "Sometimes I feel like I'm either too Christian or not Christian enough for everybody in the room. I try to say, I'm not trying to match your level of faith. What I'm trying to do is learn how to live what I believe is my calling to love the world."

It is for your creative embodiment of being a Christian, your unique expression of priesthood, and your imagination for mission that the Board of Trustees of the Episcopal Theological Seminary of the Southwest presents to you the degree of Doctor of Divinity, *honoris causa*.

Austin, Texas

May 22, 2018