

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church,
Timonium, Maryland

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Edited by Anne Hawkins

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FROM THE RECTOR

It is illogical to imagine miracles are magical

CHRISTIAN scholars refer to the first five books the Bible as the Pentateuch. The name is taken from a Greek word meaning "five-roll" or "five-scroll." Jewish scholars, by contrast, usually refer to these books as "the Torah" -- meaning "the Law." This is because they contain the laws that God dictated to Moses.

Genesis, the first book of the Pentateuch describes the beginning of man and the universe (the Creation), the beginning of sin (Original Sin), the beginning of the process of restoration of God's creation, and the beginning of the Hebrew nation through whom this restoration was to come.

Exodus, the second book of the Pentateuch, describes the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. It shows the development of Israel into a real nation, as God began the first stages of fulfillment of his promise to Abraham contained in Genesis 12:2-3.

Beginning in Genesis -- and continuing through Exodus and the other books of the Old Testament -- we can see God actively intervening in human affairs to perform his work of redeeming mankind from the consequences of our fall from grace described in the third chapter of the first book of the Pentateuch. In this context, consider the following miracles:

- The parting of the Red Sea (Exodus. 14:21-31).
- Stopping up the waters of the River Jordan (Joshua 3:14-17)
- The fall of Jericho (Joshua 6:6-25)
- Gideon's defeat of the Midianites (Judges 7)
- The destruction of the Assyrians (II Kings 19:35)

Here we have examples not just of God's direct intervention in human affairs, but of the power of God as the ultimate source of such events. These miracles are not contrary to the laws of nature, rather they co-opt nature for supernatural purposes.

The miracle of the parting of the Red Sea can be explained through natural science, as can the collapse of the walls of Jericho and the destruction of the Assyrian army in front of the gates of Jerusalem.

Meteorologists have discovered that the Red Sea divides in the manner recorded in Exodus when the wind blows as the book describes. The conquest of Jericho was accomplished thanks to fortuitous earthquakes. And the Assyrian army camped before Jerusalem was wiped out by a sudden epidemic.

In the case of Gideon's defeat of the Midianites, the miracle lay in God's ability to instill such courage and discipline in the children of Israel's hearts that a small number of determined men were able to overcome a vast, but disorganized host.

The miraculous also lies in the fact that these events occurred at the precise time God said they were going to occur.

It is fashionable these days to treat these miracles with skepticism. But if God created us and the universe, it seems unreasonable to suppose he would be unable to part the waters of the Red Sea, organize a couple of earthquakes at Jericho and arrange for an epidemic to strike an army camped in insanitary field conditions.

Questioning the miracles recorded in the Bible is not merely illogical, it is also presumptuous. It rests on the assumption that God is confined by the laws he devised for us, his creatures. This, in turn, reduces almighty God, the creator of

the universe, to our level of finite capability and understanding.

It would be altogether be more appropriate for God's miracles to evoke in us emotions of awe, humility and gratitude -- gratitude that just as God took the trouble to lead the Israelites out of bondage to the Promised Land, he is no less actively concerned about us and our affairs. **GPH**

Missions: Grabbing the wrong end of the stick

MISSION work is an essential element of the Christian way of life and churches today are devoting an enormous amount of time and energy to it. Individual Christians are increasingly committing themselves to "personal" ministries, offering their expertise to institutions that help the poor and underprivileged.

But has anybody ever paused to consider why -- in view of this vast outpouring of effort, energy and expenditure -- the congregations of so many churches are continuing their downward spiral? Surely these extraordinary missionary endeavors should be producing some fruit in the form of new converts?

Not so, however. And for the simple reason that large numbers of operations designated as "missions" cannot properly be described as "Christian missions." While they address serious social ills and pressing needs, modern missions often fail to make even passing reference to Christ's Gospel. Many, in fact, seem embarrassed by it.

This is quite bizarre. After all, the primary purpose of a Christian mission should be to propagate the Faith. For what greater gift can a Christian give than that of faith?

Shoving food into hungry mouths keeps the body together while the soul continues to starve. Ultimately, it is the knowledge that God loves every one of us -- that each of us is equally valued as an individual by our Heavenly Father -- that empowers the distraught, the down-trodden, and the down-and-out to rise above their circumstances.

Certainly, it is our Christian obligation to relieve their physical distress. It also a practical necessity. As the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, observed: "You can't preach to people with empty stomachs." But many missions these days address only physical needs. The spiritual hunger goes unremarked and unattended.

No matter what the media and the political demagogues may say, aside from their economic distress, many of America's poor suffer from a profound spiritual poverty. Visit the slums, and you'll see what I mean.

Churches that really want to have an impact on the ills that afflict modern society would, therefore, be advised to start missions that aim to serve both body and soul. We are commissioned as evangelists, after all, not state-employed social workers. Far from acquiescing in the marginalization of Christianity, it is our task, above all, to spread the Gospel.

As to "personal ministry," it's a dandy notion. But, again, its primary purpose must be to propagate the Gospel. What is often called "personal ministry" might actually be more accurately described as political work or, perhaps, a hobby.

Truth to tell, the best first step Christians can take towards developing a "personal ministry" is to try to apply the Faith in every aspect of their daily living. It's what the Church used to mean by "witnessing for the Faith."

It's a strategy devised by our Lord Jesus Christ. You'll find it in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven." It is the hardest ministry we have been charged with -- and, potentially, the most fruitful. **GPH**

THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR TRINITY SUNDAY

Being Sunday After Pentecost, June 3rd, 2012

8.00 AM, 9.00 AM & 11.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION

For the Epistle: Revelation 4:1-11

The Gospel: St. John 3:1-15

FOR YOUR MORNING PRAYER

The Psalter: Psalms 29 & 99

The First Lesson: Isaiah 6:1-8

The Second Lesson: St. Peter 1:1-12

FROM THE TREASURER

Please, could you give us a little financial help?

DESPITE the economic downturn – or perhaps because of it – our overheads have continued upwards. Thus the Vestry is asking each of our parishioners and friends prayerfully to consider increasing your financial support this year.

We are hoping for a modest increase in pledges for the short term. And with a view to the longer term, we are renewing our appeal for contributions to the parish Endowment Fund in order to secure the parish's future. Thanks to your past generosity, the fund currently stands at just under \$200,000. Our aim is to double that figure over the next couple of years.

The Vestry is also hoping to raise a little money to invest in the parish's future by building a children's play area behind the church. Every other church in the neighborhood has a play area, and the vestry believes that such a "child friendly" investment would be useful in attracting young families.

Please don't imagine the parish is teetering on the verge of bankruptcy. It's reasonably healthy all things considered. But we haven't begged for your increased financial support in quite a long time. We hope you listen to our needs sympathetically and give us a helping hand if you can afford it. **BILL HAWKINS**

✠ PARISH PRAYER LIST ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List and guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office at 410 560 6776.

RECOVERY: Richard, Bill, Leo, Riley, Mary-Ann, Linda Lou, Cynthia, Robert, Nancy, Judith, Deborah, Dorothy, Dr. Devadadson, Thelma, Mary, Adele, Linda, Jan, Liz, Bob, Wyatt, Jim, Reta, Sara, Tammy Sophie, Paula, Blair, Melvin, Heather, Laurie, Diane, Lynn, Katherine, Hindra, Ravi, Elizabeth, Brian, Tracey, Edithann, Jay, Perry, Amelia, Shirley, Adrian, Kimberly, Dean, Barb, Tanya, Jane, Brook, Joseph, Joshua, Rachel, Carl, Cal, Catherine, Sam, Ruth, Kristi, Paul, Sue, Patty, Antonio, Ray, Lauren-Michelle, McKayla, Randy, Jack, Grace, Fran, Carolyn, Ken, Serina, Wyatt, Bobby, Alexander, Erlene, Kathleen, Earle, Judy, William, Betty, Trisha, Peggy, Linda, Millie, Walt, Bruce, Cienna, Tom, Lelilah, Jennifer, Miriam, Karen, George, Eliza, Mel, John, Randy, James, Sarah, Linda, Suzanne, Steven, Jeanne, Tammy; Ellen, Patricia, Bonnie, Mary Ann, Christine, Dee, Brian, Barbara, Gillian, Eileen, Matthew, Bryan, Jason, Joan, Frances, Pat, Michael, Brandon, May, Scott, Stephen, Danny, Billy, Betty-Ann, Mildred, D'Metrius, Laura, Stacey, Frank, Christine, John, Henry, Naomi, Pam, Ben, Kevin, Gwen, Gloria, Lee Emily, Bruce, Regina, Lewis, Madolin, Linda, Carol, Bernie, Charlene, Josephine, Margaret, Jody, Sheila, Jo Anne, John, Geradine, Thomas, Jeanne, Sister Catherine-Grace, Maxine, Ann Sharon, Dennis, Mae, Anita, Marilyn, Lawrence, Joanne, ✠Albion, Martha, Jackie, Charles, Tony, Edward, Kim, Vivian, Doris, Carol, and Suzie.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Aaron, Hope, Tom, Jennifer, Brendan, Rosa, June, Anna, Jean, Garrett, Ned, Stephen, Rachel, Robert & Renee, Lydia; Richard, Melba, Debbie, Phyllis, Carolyn, Suzanne, Tony, Erik, Drake, Bobby, Kay & Emma, Gillian, Beverley, Adrienn, Jhana, Marla, Matthew, Joan, Laurie, Ellen, Lynn, Mildred, Sarah Lee, Susan, Kathy, Owen, Douglas, Amy, Jo Anne, Mary, Gregory, Isabel, Bobby, Dorothy, Darren, Scott, Rebecca, William, Charles, Joyce, Asfa, Eleanor, Kathy, Linda, James, Barry, Ann, Evelyn, Jeanette, Elizabeth, Virginia, Mildred, Chris, Stephen, Carol, Sandra, John, Mary, Michael and David

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: LTC R.J. Lytle, PFC Charles E. Heintz, IV, USA; Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Charles Watts, Capt. Charles Bursi, USN. Lt. Col. Harry Hughes, Major Benjamin Hawkins, British Army

REPOSE OF THE SOUL: Scott Woodall

FOR THOSE WHO MOURN: John & Jane Woodall & family.

✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠

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Web Address: ststeve.com

RECTOR: The Venerable Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Rev. Rhae E. Kelley

ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric

DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)

WEDDING CO-ORDINATOR: Anne Hawkins (410-308-2771)

SUNDAY SERVICES

8.00 am: Said Eucharist

9.00 am: Sung Eucharist (*with Nursery & Church School*)

11.15 am: Choral Mattins (*1st Sunday: Choral Eucharist*)

6.00 pm: Choral Evensong (*1st Sunday only*)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6.00 pm: Evening Prayer

Friday Noon: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5.00 pm: Family Eucharist.

COLLECTS FOR WHITSUNDAY & SAINT ALCUIN OF YORK

O GOD, who as at this time didst teach the hearts of thy faithful people, by sending to them the light of thy Holy Spirit; Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through the merits of Christ Jesus our Saviour, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the same Spirit, one God, world without end. *AMEN*

Book of Common Prayer, Page 180

ALMIGHTY God, in a rude and barbarous age thou didst raise up thy deacon Alcuin to rekindle the light of learning: Illumine our minds, we pray, that amid the uncertainties and confusions of our own time we may show forth thy eternal truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. *AMEN.*

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