

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Timonium, Maryland

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Edited by Anne Hawkins

July 24th, 2012

FROM THE RECTOR

Loving our neighbors is far from our nature

A CALLER on a radio talk show not so long ago ventured to suggest that all would be right with American society and the world in general if only people would love each other a bit more.

Bingo! That hits the nail on the head!

If drug dealers loved addicts a bit more they wouldn't enslave them with narcotics. If muggers loved their victims a bit more they wouldn't rob and maim and kill them. If rioters loved their neighbors a bit more they wouldn't burn their homes and pillage their property. And so *ad infinitum*.

There is, of course, nothing particularly profound about this thought. It doesn't take the brain of a rocket scientist to work out that loving each other a bit more is the answer to almost all of society's ills – at least those that aren't occasioned by accident or infirmity.

But the problem is not identifying the problem. If that was all there is to it, the Flower Children would have solved everything back in the 1960s. That's what their "love-ins" and "give peace a chance" songs were all about.

The trouble is that while we know things would be very much better if we all did love other people a bit more, the sad truth is that we don't love each other even the tiniest bit more. Truth to tell, these days it seems that we love each other an awful lot less.

Nor should we find this entirely surprising. There is, you see, absolutely nothing natural about people loving other people in a generic sense. It is far more natural for us to be highly suspicious of each other. Indeed, not to put too fine a point on it, it is very much more natural for us to dislike one another than to love one another.

Think about it: It is highly probable that we love our parents, our spouses and our children. It is probable that we feel affection towards most of our relations and most people in our immediate social circle.

But as for the wider world, most of the people in it are definitely suspect. What's more, the depth of our suspicion increases in direct proportion to the distance – literally but also socially – they are from us.

Where, then, does this notion that we should all love one another come from?

The answer should be obvious to folks who go to church and to synagogue. Christians and Jews don't have much choice in the matter. God *commands* us to love one another. Indeed, he doesn't give us any other option.

Jesus' Summary of the Law is an exposition of the meaning of what is known in Hebrew as *Shema Yisrael* (or *Shema* for short). In English, it translates as "Hear, O Israel." The *Shema* comprises Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 11:13-21 and Numbers: 15:37-41.

The 4th and 5th verses of Deuteronomy encapsulate the

monotheistic essence of our faith: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."

And Jesus follows this statement up with an explanation of how the *Shema* should be translated into our lives:

"This is the first Commandment, and the second is like: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other Commandment greater than these. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The fact that the *Shema* constitutes the centerpiece of the ante-communion of the Anglican Eucharist and forms the most important part of Jewish Morning and Evening Prayer indicates how different the Judeo-Christian understanding of God is from that of Islam.

However, God's command that we should love our neighbors as ourselves is sure and certain proof that loving people outside the immediate circle of our family and friends does not come naturally or easily.

If it came naturally to us, Jesus, who shared our human nature and knows what we are like from personal experience, wouldn't have bothered to mention it. What's more, if it came easily, he wouldn't have made such a big deal about it.

Jesus has made loving our neighbors an obligation for Christians. But my talk show caller was most definitely not a Christian. Indeed, she spoke disparagingly of Christians as she was making her point.

It is something of a paradox that so many non-Christians subscribe to the idea that it is natural for people to love one another. How could they possibly have gotten such a

bizarre idea? After all, there is nothing in the Theory of Evolution that should lead them to believe it to be the case.

The idea of folks altruistically loving other folks doesn't square very well with the concept of the survival of the fittest. The notion of folks trampling other folks into the ground to gain some slight advantage is rather more in keeping with orthodox evolutionary theory.

Nor, for that matter, does the concept of altruistic love as a natural phenomenon square with modern thinking on the subject of ethics. It is utterly illogical for people who subscribe to the idea that there are no such things as moral absolutes and who practice "situation ethics" [ethics that change according to the situation: e.g. "honor among thieves"] to practice the sort of altruistic love the radio caller is advocating.

Love is not an abstract concept – or at least it cannot be if the intention is that it should transform us into kinder, gentler people. This sort of transforming love manifests itself in the way you *treat* people, not in the way you *think* about them.

The contention that ethics change according to the situation dictates that we put our own interests above those of others. And the intrinsic selfishness this sort of thinking reinforces is the antithesis of the altruistic love for which the radio caller so desperately yearns. **GPH ✕**

St. Stephen's
COMMUNITY
BLOOD DRIVE
3.00 PM to 8.00 PM
at The Parish Church
Tuesday, July 24th, 2012
www.ststeve.com

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR
THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**

Being Sunday, July 29th, 2012

**8.00 AM & 9.00 AM
HOLY COMMUNION**

The Epistle: Romans 8:12-17

The Gospel: St. Matthew 7:15-21

11.15 AM MORNING PRAYER

The Psalter: Psalm 91

The First Lesson: Proverbs 11:24-34

The Second Lesson: St. Matthew 7:15-21

FROM THE PARISH CHEFS

Silly Summer Suppers are now being served

THE MOMENT you have all been awaiting has arrived. Each Thursday the chefs of St. Stephen's are serving the 2012 series of "Silly Summer Suppers."

Actually, it's hard to think of a less appropriate name than "Silly Summer Suppers" for these remarkable gastronomic events. They are not simply about eating. They are about having fun and fellowship with friends from all over the community. Indeed, you don't need to be a member of the parish to attend. Everybody is welcome.

The food is absolutely scrumptious – and there is plenty of it. The only thing silly about these suppers is the price -- entrée, dessert and salad for just \$10. Soda costs a buck and wine at \$3 per glass and \$5 for two.

Afterwards you can visit with friends. enjoy a light hearted game of Bingo, or even -- it is rumored -- make up a foursome for bridge. So why not join us on Thursday and enjoy a fun even with new friends and old.

✠ 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: Michael, Donna, Diane, John, Robert, David, Richard, Bill, Charlotte, Leo, Riley, Mary-Ann, Linda Lou, Cynthia, Nancy, Judith, Deborah, Dorothy, Dr. Devadadson, Thelma, Mary, Adele, Linda, Jan, Liz, Bob, Wyatt, Jim, Reta, Sara, Tammy Sophie, Paula, Blair, Melvin, Heather, Laurie, 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, 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, Leliliah, Jennifer, Miriam, Karen, George, Eliza, Ray, 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, Maxine, Ann, Sharon, Dennis, Mae, Anita, Marilyn, Lawrence, Joanne, 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, Lt. Nicholas Clouse USN, Major Benjamin Hawkins, British Army

✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠

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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 TRINITY VII AND ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE

LORD of all power and might, who art the author and giver of all good things; Graft in our hearts the love of thy Name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN.*

GRANT, O merciful God, that, as thine holy Apostle Saint James, leaving his father and all that he had, without delay was obedient unto the calling of thy Son Jesus Christ, and followed him; so we, forsaking all worldly and carnal affections, may be evermore ready to follow thy holy commandments; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN.*

Book of Common Prayer, Pages 197 & 246

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