

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXIII, Number 38

Edited by Anne Hawkins

October 2nd, 2012

FROM THE RECTOR

Jesus' "wife" joins the battle of the sexes

A WHOLE load of folks have got their knickers in a bunch about an announcement by a Harvard Divinity School professor that she has discovered an ancient Christian document that claims Jesus had a wife.

However before we get round to completely rewriting Christ's Gospel it is worth examining the source of the document – gleefully dubbed *The Gospel of Jesus' Wife* – and the institution at which the discovery was made.

The so-called "gospel" was written in 4th Century AD Egypt and is written in Coptic, the language spoken by the Egyptians of the time. The professor who discovered it, Karen L. King, and other scholars have solemnly proclaimed it to be genuine.

There is absolutely no reason to doubt them. Egypt of the 4th Century has long been known as a rich source of bizarre fabricated accounts of the lives of Jesus and his disciples.

A similarly strange find – dubbed *the Gospel of Judas [Iscairiot]* – was unveiled amid much ballyhoo a year or so back. This "gospel" has since dropped off all but the most obscure academic radar – a fate destined to be shared by the *Gospel of Jesus Wife*.

Publish or perish academia, aided and abetted by an overwhelmingly anti-Christian big media, have been feverishly trying to portray the "newly discovered gospel" as possibly shedding light on "a controversial aspect" of Jesus' life.

They wish!

There is so much similar stuff floating around – all utterly discredited by reputable scholars as works of fiction – it is difficult to see what a "business card size" piece of papyrus containing a mere eight lines of barely legible script could contribute to our knowledge of the heretical Egyptian Gnostic sect that produced it, much less the true Gospel.

A key to understanding the wholly over-blown nature of the controversy lies in the discoverer's academic speciality. The focus of Professor King's studies are Coptic literature, Gnosticism and women in the Bible⁷

In fact, she has also published the aforementioned *Gospel of Judas* and the similarly fictional *Gospel of Mary of Magdala*. She presented her research earlier this month in Rome at the International Congress of Coptic Studies.

"Christian tradition has long held that Jesus was not married, even though no reliable historical evidence exists to support that claim," King said.

"This new gospel doesn't prove that Jesus was married, but it tells us that the whole question only came up as part of vociferous debates about sexuality and marriage.

"From the very beginning, Christians disagreed about whether it was better not to marry, but it was over a century after Jesus's death before they began appealing to Jesus' marital status to support their positions."

Jesus' marital status has long been a focus of feminist, and other "cutting edge" theologians, to discredit the four canonical Gospels and establish their own radically revised orthodoxy.

Indeed, a bonus in unveiling the controversial scrap of papyrus in Rome was probably the prospect of cocking a snook at Pope Benedict XVI and the Roman Catholic Church which requires its priests to be celibate. The agenda was

spelled out by Michael D'Antonio, who writes a blog about the Roman Church for the left-leaning Huffington Post. "Beyond internal Catholic Church politics, a married Jesus invites a reconsideration of orthodox teachings about gender and sex," he said.

"If Jesus had a wife, then there is nothing extra Christian about male privilege, nothing spiritually dangerous about the sexuality of women, and no reason for anyone to deny himself or herself a sexual identity."

Professor King and her supporters are trying to argue the document is a translation of an earlier one that was written in Greek. This seems a stretch. There is no reason to believe that the origin of this document is any different from that of the many other Gnostic writings that have been unearthed in Egypt over the centuries.

In fact, it is possible that this "gospel" fragment is associated with the source of the major cache of such writings found at Nag Hammadi, the site of the ancient Egypto-Greek city of Chenboskian, in Egypt just after World War II.

These writings, all originating centuries after the Apostolic era, were widely published in the 1950s. Some decades later they were "resurrected" by feminist theologians in their efforts to support feminist religious theories.

Gnosticism flourished in Egypt long after it had ceased to be a major thorn in the flesh of Christian orthodoxy elsewhere. But then Egypt had a multi-millennia history of mystery cults.

Indeed, it had a tradition of blatantly inventing gods in the whole – for example Serapes, introduced by the Ptolemies [Cleopatra's forbears] – order to embrace and synthesize both ancient Egyptian and Greek religious thought. Small wonder, then, that early

Egyptian Coptic Christians – raised on a diet of mystery religion – felt free to do the same to a Christianity they found a tad too plain spoken and straightforward for their tastes.

Furthermore, it is curiously apt that the "discovery" was made by a Harvard Divinity School professor. The institution in recent years has developed something of a reputation for unorthodox theological speculation -- becoming a sort of North American Nag Hammadi, in fact. **GPH**✘

FROM THE PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE

Join us for the parish's traditional Fall Picnic

ST. STEPHEN'S oldest tradition -- the Annual Fall Picnic -- will take place at the home of Ellen Reather on scenic Dulaney Valley Road, Glen Arm, Sunday, October 14th at 1.00 PM. If great food, good company and crisp country air appeals to you, this is an event not to be missed.

Ellen's gracious home – address: 13201 Dulaney Valley Road, Glen Arm, MD 21057 – is the perfect place for a traditional family fall celebration. The house is set among rolling hills, and the trees should still be in fine color.

Ellen keeps a small herd of sheep – a happy reminder of St. Stephen's early picnics at the farm of Ruth Shriver and her late husband Charles just outside Westminster. Sadly, Charles passed away a couple of years ago, but Ruth is still with us, and we hope she will be able to join in the festivities.

The Parish Life Committee will provide beverages, not to mention the hot dogs and hamburgers – all grilled under the personal supervision of our gourmet treasurer, Bill Hawkins.

It would, however, be much appreciated if folks whose family names begin with letters from A to M should bring salads or casseroles, while those whose names start with letters N to Z should bring desserts or cake,.

St. Stephen's Choir
invites you to
A CHORAL
EVENSONG
at 6.00 PM
at The Parish Church
Sunday, October 7th, 2012

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

Being Sunday, October 7th, 2012

**8.00 AM, 9.15 AM & 11.15 AM
HOLY COMMUNION**

The Epistle: I Corinthians 1:4-8

The Gospel: St. Matthew 22:34-46

FOR YOUR MORNING PRAYER

The Psalter: Psalms 48 & 112

The First Lesson: Proverbs 2:1-9

The Second Lesson: I Timothy 3:14-4:16

FROM THE PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE

**Something old, something (nearly)
new -- our Secondhand Rose sale**

SOME FOLKS (our rector, for example) seem quite incapable of throwing things out. The rector not only still owns the suit he was married in, but the sports jacket and slacks he wore on his honeymoon. In fact, his closets would fill a fashion museum with garments stretching back through the "Swinging London" era of the 1960s to the schoolboy styles of the 1950s.

We are betting that he is not the only one in the parish with closets and wardrobes crammed to overflowing with gently used clothing -- some vintage; some nearly new -- that desperately needs a new home.

Thus we decided that nothing could be more timely than a "Secondhand Rose Sale." We are looking for gently used clothing, clean and in good condition, from periods ranging from medieval to modern times. We would also be grateful for shoes, accessories, jewelry and purses in good condition. Curtains and drapes would also be welcome.

The sale is for the benefit of a Sunday School playground. The sale dates are: Friday, October 19th, from Noon to 8.00 PM; and Saturday, October 20th, from 10.00 AM to 2.00 PM. We would also appreciate volunteers to help run the sale. For more information, contact Martha Miller's e-mail at eieiowe@comcast.net or call the parish office: 410-560-6776.

✠ **PARISH PRAYER LIST** ✠

OUR Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice & Dr. Bob's Place. 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: Sharon, Paul, Andy, Michael, Rosina, Timothy, Donna, Diane, John, Robert, David, Richard, Bill, Charlotte, Leo, Riley, Mary-Ann, Linda Lou, Cynthia, Nancy, Judith, Deborah, Dorothy, Dr. Devadason, 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, Lelilah, 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: JoAnn, Larry, 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, Carol, Sandra, John, Mary, Michael and David

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

✠ **St Stephen's Anglican Church** ✠

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Tel.: Office (410) 560-6776; Rectory (410) 665-1278
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

9.15 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 XVII AND
ST. MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS**

LORD, we pray thee that thy grace may always prevent and follow us, and make us continually to be given to all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *AMEN.*

Book of Common Prayer, Page 213

ALMIGHTY God, who didst plant in the heart of thy servant William Tyndale a desire to bring the Scriptures to thy people in their native tongue, and didst endow him with felicity of speech and the strength to persevere:

Reveal to us thy Word which he set forth, and, by engrafting it in our hearts, to obtain thy heavenly treasure; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, one God World without end. *AMEN.*

Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
TIMONIUM MD
PERMIT NO.181

St. Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093