

# St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church  
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXIV, Number 26

Edited by Don Ruthig

July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2013

## FROM THE RECTOR

### The spirit of our age offers new sins for old

CHRISTIANITY'S critics are apt to claim that it is utterly out of step with the spirit of the age. And one has to admit they are right on the money. Measured against the spirit of the present age the Seven Deadly Sins – pride, envy, gluttony, sloth *et al.* – are as outmoded as last summer's beach wear.

What's more in the spirit of the age they have been replaced with a new and all-embracing sin against which the whole ancient pantheon of sins pales into insignificance.

This new sin is called "negativism." And it usually travels hand-in-hand with another almost equally grievous sin called "judgmentalism."

Be warned! These two sins seem to be worse than anything that we have yet encountered. Apparently, practitioners of "negativism" and "judgmentalism" can end up in a whole heap of trouble.

Who knows, they might even be running the risk of being expelled from their health clubs and having the cup holders in their SUVs confiscated?

For those antediluvians who have failed to keep up with the spirit of the age, I'll do my best to explain how these new sins work:

"Negativism" is, basically, a predilection to be critical of the human race and the things it gets up to. "Negativism" is frequently committed in sermons and parish newsletters, but it can also creep into casual conversations around the dinner table.

"Judgmentalism" is probably most accurately described as a predisposition towards "negativism."

Those of you who have read The Bible recently – admittedly a rapidly shrinking proportion of the population – doubtless realize that churchgoers need to restructure their attitudes towards "The Good Book" in order to accommodate these newly-identified sins.

Actually, if the spirit of the age is right, The Bible can no longer be regarded as "the good book" at all. Even the most casual appraisal of its contents indicates that – in the light of these newly-discovered sins – it would be more accurately described as a "Bad Book."

Take a look at it, and you'll see that God doesn't have a very high opinion of the human race. Quite the opposite, in fact. He seems to think that humans can be pretty horrible.

Indeed, by the end of the third Chapter of Genesis, he has kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden – no second chances, no pleas in mitigation, no probation before judgment.

Don't even think about Miranda Rights, the right to a trial before a jury of one's peers, or time off for good behavior. The Genesis System of Justice, by the standards of the spirit of the age, is a complete abomination.

God, for example, zaps the entire world except Noah simply because people don't want to play the game his way. And, what's more, things don't get any better after the flood.

The Ten Commandments are pure "negativism." All but two of them are "thou shalt nots." And the two "thou shalt" require people to honor their parents and keep the sabbath day holy -- which is not only no fun at all, but there's not the slightest pretense of democracy about it.

The New Testament is more of the same. Jesus lectures us about this. Jesus lectures us about that. Jesus tells us that we don't understand. He never says how great we are – never gives us a pat on the back.

Look at St. Matthew's Gospel, Chapter 19, Verses 16-22 – the story of the rich young man, who asks Jesus what he must do to have eternal life.

Jesus tells him to keep all the Commandments and the young chap says he has done so since childhood -- not a bad record, one might think.

But instead of congratulating him on a job well done, Jesus tells him to sell everything he has and to give the proceeds to the poor. It's the ultimate put-down.

Now clearly there are old fogies (and young fogies, too) who can't get into this spirit of the age stuff. (You can count me as one of them. Why else would I do something as daft as wearing my collar back to front?)

They say that the spirit of this age should be measured against

## Calendar of Events

### Weekly Activities at St Stephens

**Tuesdays, 7.00 AM:** Bible Study at the Nautilus Diner

**Thursdays, 10.00 AM:** Knitting Circle meets in the Parish Hall

**Thursdays, 7.00 PM:** Bridge Group meets in the Parish Hall

**Fridays, 10.30 AM:** Bible Study in the vestibule

### Special Events

**Tuesday, July 9<sup>th</sup>:** Parish Life Meeting 7.00 PM

**Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>:** Ladies Who Lunch at 12 Noon - Green Turtle Restaurant

**Wednesday, July 17<sup>th</sup>:** Vestry Meeting at 7.00 PM

**Sunday, September 8<sup>th</sup>:** Parish Picnic at the home of Ellen Reather

the Eternal Spirit of All the Ages. And by that standard, the spirit of our age is entirely out of step and headed in precisely the wrong direction.

According to the fogies, God created the world and, consequently, he knows very much more about it than human beings do.

The fogies point out that it is our duty to try to understand God's will and do it. This means we should try to understand the Bible, rather than pull it to pieces.

They explain that the Bible tells us about terrible things that happened to the Children of Israel in order to help us avoid similar pitfalls.

And they point out that Christ's teachings are intended to help us not only to live happy, hopeful and fruitful lives, but, ultimately, to enable us to attain life eternal.

The bad news is that, being human, even the best us will stray from the straight and narrow path from time to time. Sometimes, we will do some truly awful things that put our whole relationship with God in jeopardy of his judgment.

The good news, however, is that the Bible tells us we have an easy way of getting back into his good graces – simply by confessing what we have done and asking Jesus, our "only mediator and advocate", to intercede on our behalf.

And in order to facilitate this exchange, Jesus established his Church.

Like or lump it, the Church needs to be just a tad "judgmental" in order to do its job properly. After all, if the church doesn't identify what is sinful and why, folks will have to figure things out on their own.

The opening chapters of Genesis illustrate the pitfalls human beings face when trying to go it alone. It got Adam and Eve into a whole heap of trouble.

The problem is that human beings seems to have a remarkable talent for rationalizing their way into concluding that nasty vices are, in fact, great virtues.

When churches fall into line with the spirit of the age and join in its blanket condemnation of "judgmentalism" and "negativism" it renders them not merely useless to mankind, but thoroughly dangerous.

Many churches have already done just that. They have broken with the Apostolic faith and fallen into line with the spirit of the age -- rejecting the authority of the scriptures.

The consequences of this have been plain to see in parade of ugliness and evil that forms the bulk of the content of the nightly news and the morning papers.

For the most part, the churches that have abandoned the core of the Christian faith explain they are simply following Jesus' command that we love our neighbors. What's more, they condemn Christians who cleave to a traditional understanding of things as self-righteous, intolerant and uncharitable.

It has to be admitted that Christians have, indeed, frequently been guilty of being self-righteous, intolerant and uncharitable in their dealings with those with whom they disagree.

Ironically, however, the folks who follow the spirit of the

**Silly Summer Suppers - Thursdays at 5.30 PM. Join Us!**

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY**  
 July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013  
**8.00 AM & 9.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION**  
 The Epistle: Romans 6:19-23  
 The Gospel: St. Mark 8:1-9  
**11.15 AM SUNG MATTINS**  
 The Psalter: Psalm 116  
 The First Lesson: Micah 7:14-20  
 The Second Lesson: St. Mark 8:1-9

present age tend to be even more negative, judgmental, self-righteous, intolerant and uncharitable than those they condemn.

The fact of the matter is that all human beings have a predisposition to sin. To deny this is to deny history. Thus, as Jesus points out, we should first face up to our own shortcomings before we condemn those of others.

What both the followers of the spirit of the age the modernists and the traditionalists often overlook is that the condemnation of sinners is God's job, not ours. Jesus established his church to reconcile us, sinners, with God. That's a horse of quite another color. **GPH\***

**✠ 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:** Brice, Reta, Kathleen, David, Evelyn, Ellen, Mimi, Val, Stacy, Dino, Michael, Finton, Morris, Charles, Dawn, Betty Jean, Elliot, Sharon, Paul, Andy, Michael, Rosina Donna, Diane, John, David, Richard, Bill, Charlotte, Leo, Riley, Mary-Ann, Linda Lou, Cynthia, Nancy, Judith, Deborah, Dorothy, Thelma, Mary, Linda, Jan, Liz, Bob, Wyatt, Jim, Sara, Tammy Sophie, Paula, Blair,

Heather, Laurie, Lynn, Katherine, Hindra, Ravi, Elizabeth, Brian, Tracey, Edithann, Jay, Perry, Amelia, Shirley, Adrian, Kimberly, 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, Erline, 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, 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, JoAnne, John, Geradine, Thomas, Jeanne, Maxine, Ann, Sharon, Dennis, Mae, Anita, Marilyn, Lawrence, Joanne, Martha, Jackie, Charles, Tony, Edward, Kim, Vivian, Doris, Fran, Carol, Jimmy, Felicia, Susan, Christina, Dawn, Shirley, Daniel and Suzie.

**LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE:** JoAnn, Larry, Aaron, Hope, Bob, Paige, Tom, Rosa, June, Anna, Jean, Garrett, Dean, Ned, Stephen, Rachel, Lydia; Richard, Melba, Debbie, Phyllis, Carolyn, Suzanne, Tony, Erik, Bobby, Kay & Emma, Gillian, Beverley, Adrienn, Jhana, Marla, Matthew, Joan, Laurie, Ellen, Lynn, Mildred, Sarah Lee, Susan, Kathy, Owen, Douglas, Amy, 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, Drake, Emily, Daniel, and David

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

**FOR REPOSE OF THE SOUL:** Dean

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 PREBENDARY: The Rev. Rhae E. Kelley  
 VICAR: The Rev. Michael Kerouac  
 ORGANIST & CHOIRMASTER: Adric  
 DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE: Happy Riley  
 (410- 252-8674)  
 WEDDING CO-ORDINATORS: Happy Riley (410-252-8674)  
 Martha Miller (410-321-9038)  
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 THE Sixth Sunday after Trinity and Benedict of Nursia**

O GOD, who hast prepared for those who love thee such good things as pass man's understanding; Pour into our hearts such love toward thee, that we, loving thee above all things, may obtain thy promises, which exceed all that we can desire; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

*Book of Common Prayer, Page 197*

ALMIGHTY and everlasting God, whose precepts are the wisdom of a loving Father: Give us grace, following the teaching and example of thy servant Benedict, to walk with loving and willing hearts in the school of the Lord's service; let thine ears be open unto our prayers; and prosper with thy blessing the work of our hands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

AMEN

**Return Service Requested**

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