

# St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church  
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXIV, Number 50

Edited by Don Ruthig

December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013

FROM THE RECTOR

## The Grinch can't really steal Christmas

IT'S ESPECIALLY important at this time of year for Christians to try their very best to show Christian charity towards the season's Grinches. And by Grinches, I don't just mean the people who elbow their way in front of you in the stores or cut you off on the Beltway.

The Grinches I'm talking about are the folks who are trying to expunge all public mention, not just of Christmas, but of the entire Christian faith. They are the people who petition the courts to ban the display in public places of Christians symbols - crosses, Nativity scenes, angels . . .

It is difficult, of course, for Christians to understand kill-joys. Nobody's obliged to celebrate Christmas. That's obvious. But why on earth should the Grinches object to other folks doing so. Could the answer be that they can't stand the thought of other people being happy when they feel miserable?

Okay, so that's not charitable. But could it be they find it difficult to believe God would want to redeem folks who fall so far short of his standards of holiness by allowing Jesus, his only begotten Son to take the rap? Could it be that because they find this difficult to believe, they resent other people taking comfort from believing it - and their disbelief, somehow, engenders a resentment against God?

To some degree, I guess such resentment is understandable. The very notion of God coming down as a little baby - the most vulnerable creature imaginable - to redeem mankind is not merely counter intuitive, it's counter to all commonsense.

Even the most stupid of human beings wouldn't be so naively trusting as that. And that's the problem: Human beings simply wouldn't "do an incarnation" this way. I'm not saying they'd do things better. That's blasphemy. But humans would probably put some market research into it. You know the sort of thing: They'd call in a management consultant, or, better yet, one of those big public relations firms.

The first things to go, of course, would be the hokey carpenter and his significant other. The horny-handed son of toil shtick

might work with Country and Western Music, but you'll need something a bit more up market for the redemption of mankind. I mean why would anyone to look for the Saviour of the World in a row house in Cockeysville, let alone a stable in Bethlehem.

Sure, the White House is a bit of a cliché, but if you are looking for the Saviour of the World, it makes more sense to search the White House for him, or the Kremlin even, than a stable. Take the Three Wise Men. Where did they go first? King Herod's Royal Palace. That, I submit, is the place any reasonable human being would look for the King of the Jews - not some lock-up garage in the boondocks.

But, actually, the entire Jewish bit would have to go — not for any anti-Semitic reason, I hasten to add. It simply isn't practical giving a vital job like saving the human race to an ethnic minority, especially one that's so unpopular in so many quarters today. The Chinese or Indians would make much more suitable Messiahs.

But, come to think of it, a Brit would make the most appropriate Messiah of all. No, that's not because I'm British. It's because Britain is ethnically diverse. Every ethnic group on earth lives there. And, besides, English is the world's most widely spoken language. Think how convenient it would be to combine salvation for yourself and your loved ones with a visit to Buckingham Palace and the Tower of London. It's a pity God never seems to consult human beings about such things.

After all, what's intrinsically wrong with combining a plan for our salvation with the profit motive? Imagine the revenue the new plan would generate for the travel business alone.

The downside is that the plan doesn't take account of that messy business of free will. For some reason, God created humans with the ability to think for themselves, which means, of necessity, they have the option of accepting his love or rejecting it. But, under the plan we are reviewing, this option would be off the table.

If the King of England - or the Tsar of Russia or the President of the United States, for that matter - were to save mankind, he'd do it by Executive Order or an act of Parliament or an act of Congress. And Executive Orders and acts

of Congress do not leave room for free will. Either you obey or it's the pokey.

That's a serious stumbling block. For some reason God wants us to have free will. And if he made salvation compulsory, he would rob us

**CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR**  
Schedule, Dec. 24<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014

**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
Tuesday, December 24<sup>th</sup>  
4.00 PM: Children's Christmas Service & Blessing of the Creche  
7.00 PM: Family Candlelight Eucharist  
10.30 PM: Choir sings carols followed by Solemn High Christmas Eucharist

**CHRISTMAS DAY**  
Wednesday, December 25<sup>th</sup>  
10.00 AM Sung Holy Communion

**PATRONAL FESTIVAL**  
The Feast of St. Stephen  
Comm. Sunday, December 29<sup>th</sup>  
8.00 AM: Holy Communion  
9.15 AM: Sung Holy Communion  
11.15 AM: Sung Mattins

**NEW YEAR'S EVE**  
The Feast of St. Sylvester  
Tuesday, December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013  
11.15 PM

**NEW YEAR'S DAY**  
The Feast of the Holy Name  
Wednesday, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014  
10.00 AM: Holy Communion

**EPIPHANY**  
Sunday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2014  
At 6.00 PM The Choir will sing  
**A FESTIVAL OF LESSONS & CAROLS FOR EPIPHANY**

### Christmas Memorial Flowers

To make a contribution towards the Church Christmas decorations in honor or memory of a loved one please complete this form and return it with a check (payable to St. Stephen's Church and marked for Christmas flowers) by December 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Name of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

Poinsettias (Red, White or Pink) 6 inches, single (5-8 blooms @ \$10 (# of plants.....))

7 inches, double, (10-12 blooms) @ \$16 (# of plants.....)

8 inches, triple, (Red) (12-18 blooms) @ \$27 (# of plants.....)

Total # of plants \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is **IN HONOR, IN MEMORY OF, IN THANKSGIVING FOR** (please circle)

\_\_\_\_\_

**THE SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THE  
THE COMMEMORATION OF THE  
FEAST OF ST. STEPHEN**

December 29<sup>th</sup>, 2013

**8.00 AM & 9.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION**

For the Epistle: Acts 7:55-60  
The Gospel: St. Matthew 23:34-39

**11.15 AM CHORAL MATTINS**

The Psalter: 30  
The First Lesson: Wisdom 4:7-15  
The Second Lesson: St. Matthew 23:34-39

of that very quality that defines our humanity. This is why God doesn't do things by Executive Order.

Rather than deprive us of our free will, God did something amazingly loving and amazingly generous — something no sane human being would dream of doing. God sent us his only begotten Son to pay the price for our willfulness and ingratitude. And to demonstrate how much he loves us, he sent him to live as one of us - to start life on earth as human baby, the most vulnerable creature of all. As St. John puts it: "So God loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Now that's the most Christmas present of all. It's so sad the Grinches can't bring themselves to take comfort in it.

From all of us at St. Stephen's, a very merry Christmas to you all. GUY HAWTIN\*

**FROM THE EDITOR**

**Time off for good behavior**

As has been our custom, this will be the last issue of St. Stephen's News until January 7<sup>th</sup>.

It's also a fitting time to say thank you to the stalwart gang that gathers every Thursday morning to prepare our newsletter for mailing: Donna Szper, Joyce Perlberg, Mar Bobst, and Jim

Halbert. Judging from the laughter emanating from the Cadwalader Room they're having entirely too much fun doing it!

**✠ 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:** Fr Guy Donna, Aida, Eunice, Cherry, Ruth, Carolyn, Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, Suzie, Mary John, Charlene, Rodney, Hamilton, Jane, Donald, Annie, Carolyn, Cynthia, Evelyn, Edith, Dee, Cal, Finton, Fran, Tracey, Linda Lou, Edie, John, Beth, Adele, Melba, Lydia, Chandra, Brady, Nina, Stacy, Dee, Val, baby Charlie and Maryann.

**LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE:** Connie, Azalea, Stephen, Ann, Paige, Lydia, Remi, Melba

**ON ACTIVE SERVICE:** Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN. Lt. Col. Harry Hughes, Ian Cadwalader serving in Afghanistan.

**FOR REPOSE OF THE SOUL:** Pat, Bill

**FOR THOSE WHO MOURN:** Herb and the Grymes Family,

**Calendar of Events**

**Weekly Activities at St Stephen's**

**Please note: Our weekly activities will resume during the week of January 6<sup>th</sup>.**

**Tuesdays, 7.00 AM:** Breakfast Fellowship at the Nautilus Diner

**Thursdays, 10.00 AM:** Knitting Circle meets in Quimby Hall

**Wednesdays, 6.30 PM:** Bridge Group meets in Quimby Hall

**Fridays, 10.30 AM:** Bible Study in the Cadwalader Room

**COLLECT FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY  
IN ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS DAY**

O LORD, raise up we pray thee, thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost, be honour and glory, world without end.

AMEN

ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin; Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end.

AMEN

*Book of Common Prayer Pages 95 and 96*

**✠ St Stephen's Anglican Church ✠**

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Web Address: [ststeve.com](http://ststeve.com)

RECTOR: The Rev. Canon Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Venerable 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.

**Return Service Requested**

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