



ST. STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

11856 MAYS CHAPEL RD., TIMONIUM, MD 21093

20th Anniversary of St. Stephen Parish, - September 20th, 2014

**✠ In The Name of The Father and of The Son
and of The Holy Ghost. Amen.**

The passage selected for this remembrance is taken from the 84th Psalm:

“O how amiable are thy dwellings; Thou Lord of hosts

My soul has a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord;

My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God

Yea, the sparrow has found her a house, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young;

O Lord of Hosts, My King and my God”

In the same year that this building was first opened, I began my training for the priesthood, and one of the first books I bought was a combination Book of Common Prayer and Bible. It was hard covered, with onion skin pages, so it did not travel well. The binding broke 12 years ago, clumps of pages are loose and just sitting in a pile between the covers and each of those pages are stained with the oils from my fingers.

I still use that prayer book. In fact, I still love that prayer book. When my fingers hold a page from Morning Prayer and leave one more layer of oil on the stained onionskin, I smile. I smile because that book is my companion and my friend. Each day's new prayer is layered on 20 years worth of daily prayers. Who I am and how I pray are written in that well used and fragile book.

20 years ago, you also started a prayerful tradition in this building. Like my prayer book, the building bears the marks of two decades of loving use. The walls of the Nave resonate with voices raised in praise and glory to our Lord Jesus Christ. The pews are polished with the restless bottoms of children who could not

wait for the sermon to end. The windows have reflected tears of joy from Baptisms and weddings, and tears of sadness from too many funerals. The vaulted ceiling is thick with prayers and hymns of the communion of saints particular to St. Stephen's. Today we gather and share fellowship in the Cadwallader, and Quimby rooms and Holmes Garden in the same spaces that we shared with the actual Cadwallader's and Quimby's and Holmes'.

Who we are as St. Stephen's, and how we pray, is written into every fiber and fabric of the building. We are inextricably woven into a tapestry of prayer and love, strife and life, fear and faith of every member and visitor who have graced this building. Like each of us, St. Stephen's has a peculiar character and because so many of us who make up St. Stephen's have been graced with peculiar characters. St. Stephen's has its quirks.

Our bell tower is graced with the oddest clock in Baltimore. Subconsciously, I can look at that clock and know what time it is, but I can't tell you how it is those hands actually tell a time. The bell for that clock tower is planted in the garden. THE kitchen has an oven you can't open if anyone else is using the kitchen and DON's kitchen is only for beverages. We have the most beautiful and faithfully Anglican Music program in the Eastern United States, and yet we somehow accommodate the occasional homage to Darth Vader, the Welsh Rugby team and Doctor Who without compromising either the beauty or fidelity of our Tradition.

We raise a glass with slight provocation. We “shhhh” the hush at the end of day, in our closing prayer. We are planning a Columbarium so that our friends and family who have gone on before, or will go on before, can keep attending the Garden Party and the Cookie Walk and Picnic without having to travel very far. We do like a crowd at the Altar. Father Guy has always invited other priests, bishops, deacons, acolytes, Lay Readers, postulants, aspirants, the catechist and the Liturgist to join him, even when there are more of us at the altar than in the pews. Even the offerings to Jacob’s Well crowd the Baptismal font every month to receive their blessing from the Congregation and a grumble from the Vicar.

But with all those quirks, the indelible character of St. Stephen’s is generosity and kindness. It is open homes, and open ears, and open arms and open hearts. It is the continuum of welcoming, encouragement and empathy that embraces visitors. It is the decades long devotion to our Nursing Homes, hospitals and Hospice, and to mentally ill and to the poor. It is a congregation of intentional hospitality and empathy, because each of us honors those before us who opened this family to us when we were lonely, lost and in need of grace. I have told you all many times that St. Stephen’s is the best parish I have ever known, and this is the place where my spirit is refreshed.

Of course, the parish didn’t grow into this beautiful family by accident. It was nurtured and shepherded with grace and love for the last 25 years. We celebrate this home, and this family, and we also honor the head of this family. We have a history, because he loves history. That passion is seen in his sermons, his Biblical teaching, his remembrance of the most obscure Celtic and Anglican saints as well as heroes of our American and even Baltimore’s past.

He has incredible faith in you all. He is willing to relinquish the reins to the talents of the parish, and because he trusts you, he is

rewarded with brilliant leadership in the ministries under his charge. He basks in your accomplishments and always downplays his own. He has left his bed in the middle of the night to minister, heal and sometimes console not only you, but even strangers who needed the hands and heart of Jesus in the darkest hours of their lives. I am especially thankful he was with me in my own dark nights.

Father Hawtin is that rare man, even among clerics, who practices what he preaches. When he exhorts us to forgive, he does so having forgiven those who have done deep harm to him and even to his flock. What I have seen him forgive for the sake of the Church, and the spiritual well being of those who have offended him, is a lesson that is indelibly etched in my heart. He has been in the world, the world we all live in, and he has been witness to some of the worst horrors of this world, and yet, he has emerged unscarred by cynicism, and firm in his faith in God, his commitment to prayer, and his hope in grace. He has taught all of us who serve with him to come humbly to the altar, and to open our hearts and minds and hands to be vessels of grace that emanate from the sacraments we administer. He does that all with a quick wit and a wonderful sense of humor. And he is quick to properly credit his success to the support of his be-sainted bride Charlotte, who has more patience than Job, and to his generous and loving family.

As we celebrate these important milestones in the life of St. Stephen’s, we should remember that this 20 years is just the beginning, and this beautiful parish building is just a foundation. The next 20, 50, even 100 years of grace that will be St. Stephen’s will be built on the sacrifices and love that characterized this first 20 years. Our celebration is upon us, but our work, and our destiny, and our ministry still lie ahead.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen