

St. Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church
Timonium, Maryland

Vol. XXV, Number 42

October 28th, 2014

FROM THE RECTOR

Be very careful about what you pray for . . .

IT IS VITALLY important to be very careful about what you pray for – because God might just decide to give you exactly what you requested. When, for example, we pray for God's help in deciding the right thing to do, do we really want him to do that?

Doing what's right is often entails making some sort of sacrifice we don't really want to make. Wouldn't we really be much happier if he simply left us to fester in the dark?

The Children of Israel found themselves in the uncomfortable situation of having their prayers answered – down to the letter – some 70 years after they had been carried away captive to Babylon. For 70 years they had prayed for God to let them go home and rebuild Jerusalem so that they could worship once again in his Temple.

They knew their dreams were impossible, of course. They were held captive by the only superpower in the Middle East. But these pious hopes were constantly on their lips – in prayers and psalms – not because great prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, had foretold that one day they would return, but because saying these prayers made them feel good. And because they knew they would never be fulfilled, it was a cheap and easy way of pleasing God.

Then, quite unexpectedly, the mighty Babylonian empire was overthrown by Cyrus the Great, King of Persia, who – even more unexpectedly – granted his new Jewish subjects the privilege of going home and to rebuild their Holy City. What's more, the Persians even coughed up the cash to reconstruct Solomon's Temple – a holy place that had been utterly destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon.

Now you might imagine that the Jews were overjoyed about this. After all, God had given them everything they'd prayed for during all the long years of captivity. In one fell swoop, all of their prayers had been answered – to the letter. Thus, you might imagine that when they heard the news they opened their best bottles of wine, cooked mountains of food and invited the neighbors round for a celebration.

You might imagine that, but if you did, you'd be completely wrong. Most Jews were anything but happy. They had prayed continually to God to allow them to go home, but when he actually answered their prayers, they discovered they really didn't want to go after all. Suddenly they realized that rebuilding Jerusalem wasn't at all a part of the future they had mapped out for themselves and their children.

Nor should this be entirely surprising. Most of the exiles had never seen the place. The only people who actually remembered the city in all its glory were old geezers, looking back on the place through the rosy prism of sentimentality. Everyone else had been born in exile. They had married, raised children and gone into business. They liked big city life. They didn't want to go back to some nasty, bug-infested rural backwater with no indoor plumbing.

For many of them, Cyrus the Great's edict was a moment of truth. It confronted them with the fact that they weren't really Jewish at all, but, rather, Babylonians who – by mere historical happenstance – worshipped in a Jewish manner. When it came down to the matter of loyalty, their loyalties were to Babylon, its lifestyle, culture and material comforts; not to the Lord God of Israel to whom they had been so earnestly praying.

The truth of the matter seems to be that people, for some reason or other, like to think of themselves as victims. They enjoy sitting around nursing old wounds and imagined slights, whining about how badly they have been treated and how things would much better if only . . . But when God answers their prayers and starts to set matters right, they don't seem to like it at all. They actually seem to prefer things the way they were when they were whining and moaning about them.

Calendar of Events

Weekly Activities at St Stephen's

Mondays, 6.30 PM: Bridge Club meets in Quimby Hall

Tuesdays, 7.00 AM: Breakfast Fellowship at the Nautilus Diner

Thursdays, 10.00 AM: Knitting Circle meets in Quimby Hall

Fridays, 10.30 AM: Bible Study in the Cadwalader Room

Special Events.

Sunday, November 2nd: Monthly In-giving for At Jacob's Well

Tuesday, November 11th, 7.00 PM: Parish Life Committee Meets in the Cadwalader Room

Wednesday, November 19th, 12.00 Noon: The Ladies Who Lunch at the Peppermill.

Wednesday, November 19th, 7.00 PM: Vestry Meets in the Cadwalader Room

Thursday, November 20th, 2.00 PM: Afternoon Tea

Saturday, December 6th: Cookie Walk

In any event, when it came to the crunch and the prayers were answered, the Bible tells us only "a remnant" of the vast numbers of Jews who had been carted off into captivity decided to return. When the pack animals were loaded, the leaders of the expedition counted a mere 42,000 people out of the whole people of Israel who had joined them to take advantage of Cyrus's offer and answer God's call to return to rebuild Jerusalem and its despoiled Temple.

Human nature being what it is, it probably shouldn't be entirely surprising that the story behind the building of almost every church echoes, to some degree or other, history of the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian exile.

It usually starts off with beautiful thoughts – a commonly shared vision – that everyone knows cannot possibly come true. Then, suddenly, God creates the opportunity for the fulfillment of that vision – albeit by dint of an enormous amount of effort and sacrifice.

No less suddenly, of course, large numbers of the people who had been sharing those beautiful thoughts – that common vision – get cold feet. Suddenly, the prospect of worshipping God in the beauty of holiness doesn't seem quite as attractive as golf at the country club or a European vacation.

And besides, the dear old Temple of Baal has such nice stained glass and such wonderful Victorian woodwork – especially compared with the cheesy, cheap and cheerful sort of place that the new Temple will be.

Building a new church takes an extraordinary high degree of "stick-to-it-iveness." It's an exercise, which rapidly sorts the wheat from the chaff. The room of disagreement is just enormous – not in the important things, but in fripperies like matters of taste.

It is only by the rigorous application of Christian principles that one can ever hope to get through it. It is truly a question of loving one's neighbor as much as one loves oneself – no easy task when one knows that, in matters of taste in church architecture, one's neighbor is a complete and utter Philistine.

God called the people of St. Stephen's to set about rebuilding his Temple over 30 years ago. And this parish church was the product of decade of praying, planning, working and fund-raising. Twenty years ago last month we worshipped in it for the first time.

Sometimes it felt like we had been building forever. When the returning Jews rebuilt the Temple Jerusalem, it took well over 50 years to put up something acceptable. In fact, we are told that old folk who remembered the old Temple of Solomon took a look at the first reconstruction effort and wept.

And by the standards of the folks who put up Cologne Cathedral we worked at warps speed. That great church took more than a thousand

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

November 2nd, 2014

8.00 AM & 9.15 AM HOLY COMMUNION

The Epistle: Ephesians 5:15-21

The Gospel: St. Matthew 22:1-14

11.00 AM CHORAL MATTINS

The Psalter: Psalms 11,12

The First Lesson: Malachi 2:14-17

The Second Lesson: St. Matthew 22:1-14

years to build. In fact we date pictures of old Cologne by the position of the crane on the Cathedral towers.

That building St. Stephen's was a labor of love goes without saying. That the task was hard, daunting and sometimes bitterly disappointing cannot be denied. Nor can we avoid the fact that that sort of work will continue as long as this building stands. Indeed, it should continue for it is the duty we owe to God.

But how good it felt to echo the words uttered by the returning remnant of Israel two and a half millennia ago: "The Lord is in his holy temple. Let all the earth keep silence before him . . . I was glad when they said unto me, we shall go into the house of the Lord." **GPH**

✦ **St Stephen's Anglican Church** ✦

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Web Address: ststeve.com

RECTOR: The Rev. Canon Guy P. Hawtin

VICAR: The Venerable Michael Kerouac

ASSOCIATES: Rev. Michael Belt, Rev. John Novicki

DEACON: Rev. Wiley Hawks

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*)

11.00 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.

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

**Plan to join us on November
19th**

THIS month the Ladies Who Lunch will be meeting at **11.30 AM** at the Peppermill. Why not join us for a convivial get-together over a delicious meal? Good food and good fellowship -- what more could you want? Please call Joyce Perlberg at (410) 252-2680 to make your reservation.

✦ **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 Mike, Fr Tim, Carolyn, Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, John, Rodney, Donald, Annie, Evelyn, Cal, Finton, Fran, Tracey, Linda Lou, Edie, Adele, Baby Charlie, Angie, Oona, Cary, Janna, Martina, Leela, Bobby Sally, Isabelle, Julie, Ray, Courtney, Mary, Phyllis, Liz, Joe, Indra, Ally, Marjorie, Steve, Judy, David, Wendy, John, Joy, Walt, Tina, Irma, Nina, James, Rita, Nancy.

LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Ann, Lydia, Remi, Melba, Donna, Josh, Kim, Shane, Susan, Paula, Hannah, Joseph, Scott, Charles, Devon, Mitch, Silas.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt. Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt. Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN. Lt. Col. Harry Hughes.

**COLLECT FOR THE NINETEENTH
SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY and
ALL SAINTS DAY**

O GOD, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee; Mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

O ALMIGHTY God, who hast knit together thine elect in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of thy Son Christ our Lord; Grant us grace so to follow thy blessed Saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those unspeakable joys which thou hast prepared for those who unfeignedly love thee, through the same thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

Book of Common Prayer Pages 215 and 256

Return Service Requested

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