

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

14 July 2015

FROM THE RECTOR

Reflections upon the Fourth of July

When the United States was founded as a representative republic, governed upon democratic principles, Austria, and most German states, were members of the Holy Roman Empire; Russia was ruled by an empress, a.k.a. the Autocrat of All the Russias; France was ruled by an absolute monarch; the Middle East was largely under the despotic sway of the Sultan of Turkey, ruler of the Ottoman Empire; the Indian subcontinent was governed by the British East India Company; an emperor ruled China and Japan bowed to the will of a dictator called the Shogun.

Today, all but one of those great powers has been swept away – consigned to what some politician or the other once called the trash can of history. The only one that is still in existence today was, back then, by far the least significant – a loose federation of 13 puny, impoverished states strung along the coastline of a vast land mass at the very edge of the known world.

Today the United States is far from puny. It is the most powerful nation in the world – more powerful than the Kingdom of France ever was, more powerful than China, more powerful than Japan; more powerful than even the Autocrat of All the Russias ever dreamed of being. It is rich, too – far more so than the fabulously wealthy Sultan of Turkey; far richer than the Holy Roman Empire.

Speculation as to why things should have turned out this way has, for much of this century, provided rich fodder for politicians, historians, economists, sociologists, psychologists, media hacks and bar room philosophers. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, a wide diversity of explanations for the phenomenon are on offer.

Some explanations cite the nature of the political structures of those now-vanished empires. It has been argued that monarchical and imperial systems of government are inherently unstable and, thus, the collapse of the empires was quite inevitable. It has been claimed the monarchies and empires were far too diverse, ethnically speaking, and, thus, susceptible to the nationalist aspirations of the subject peoples.

Other explanations hang on economic theory: America, it is claimed, enshrined in its constitution the fundamental right of its citizens to own and enjoy their private property; it fostered a vigorous and entrepreneurial capitalism – and this is what affords the Americans form of government its remarkable longevity.

None of these explanations withstands scrutiny. Monarchies and empires have been the way of government almost from the beginning of time. By the time our nation was founded the Holy Roman Empire had endured for 1,000 years; the Chinese empire for millennia longer than that. At its collapse, the Ottoman Empire was more than 300 years older than we are today.

Nor can ethnic diversity be considered destabilising. The Roman Empire, a model of stability, in its day embraced the whole world. And the United States was even more ethnically diverse at its founding than the Holy Roman Empire. The racial argument simply doesn't cut the mustard. Nor does the economic argument. All of those long vanished empires fostered and promoted entrepreneurial capitalism.

The clue to the United States' remarkable prosperity is to be found in the Scripture readings appointed for Independence Day. The lesson for the epistle, for instance, is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, the book in which Moses recapitulates the law God handed down to the Children of Israel during their wanderings in Sinai.

On the surface of things, it probably seems a trifle odd for the Church to have appointed a lesson from one of the most ancient books of The Bible to celebrate the declaration of the independence what is still – in terms of its political system and economic philosophy – the

most modern state in the whole world.

What about the first Amendment – the 'wall of Separation' between Church and state? Actually, the words 'wall of separation' appear nowhere in the Constitution or its amendments. In any event, our ancestors did, indeed, see direct parallels between the governance of the United States and the governance of ancient Israel.

Contrary to modern superstition, a vast majority of this nation's Founding Fathers held deep Christian convictions. There is a very good reason why they chose to found a democratic republic (something that hadn't existed for over 2,000 years) rather than a constitutional monarchy – a system of government which, for all practical purposes, would have served them equally well.

Certainly, they wanted to establish a genuinely democratic government, but, as a consequence of their profound faith, they also wanted to establish a truly 'godly' form of government.

The 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. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, ring the parish office on 410 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Hilarie, Jack, Donald, Evelyn, Cal, Finton, Edie, Cary, Judy, Julie, Phyllis, Steve, Wendy, Matthew, Adele, Starr, Helen, Emily, Marty, Don, Linda, Elizabeth, Cathy, William, Dan, Lindsey, Shelby, Rob, Dick, Melissa, Ned, Paula, Sandra, Diane, Hobie, Nathan, Francine, Susan, Joanne, Holly

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Melba, Scott, Charles, Vinnie, Doug, Rusty, Ian, Lisa, Fritz

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

The Covenant contained in Deuteronomy is a treaty of suzerainty between a king and a subject people. It is composed according to a legal formula employed in the region 1,500 years before Christ. God is the king and the Children of Israel are the subject people. And, in return, God assured them their nation would be blessed.

The lessons from the Book of Deuteronomy read on Independence Day are intended to remind us that blessings also entail obligations. We're obliged, for example, to help the poor and down-trodden; the fatherless and widowed. We are obliged to welcome the strangers in our land, remembering they have come here for the same reasons our ancestors came: to build a better life for themselves and their children.

Jesus in the Gospel tells us that, as Christians, we must go further than that: We must love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. This isn't pie in the sky. We know it works. After all, our own parents and grandparents put it into practice.

At the end of the Second World War – for the first time in history – the victors helped the vanquished to rebuild. We helped Germany and Japan to rebuild their shattered cities and devastated economies, but we did so not just with money, but by giving them a gift far more precious than gold – democratic governments modelled on our own.

We have shared our blessings and, in turn, God has blessed us. What the lessons appointed for Independence Day teach us is that as long as we continue to share our blessings we will continue to be blessed. May God bless you all and enable you to be a blessing to others. **GPH**✠

FROM THE PARISH CHEFS

Silly Summer Suppers are in full swing

Each Wednesday at 6.30pm through September 9th the chefs of St Stephen's are serving the 2015 series of *Silly Summer Suppers*.

It's hard to think of a less appropriate name than 'Silly Summer Suppers' for these remarkable gastronomic events. The food is absolutely scrumptious – and there is plenty of it. Actually, the only thing silly about these suppers is the price – entrée, dessert and salad for just \$10. Soda costs a buck, and wine is \$3 per glass or \$5 for two.

And, by the way, if you are handy in the kitchen (or even if you are not) you are welcome to join our team of volunteer chefs. In fact, if you decide to do so, you'll be welcomed with open arms. When you come to think about it, cooking your way to heaven isn't such a bad idea.

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

The Ladies will Lunch on 15 July

This month the Ladies Who Lunch will meet at Bar Louie on Wednesday, 15 July at noon. Bar Louie is located at 118 Shawan Road in Hunt Valley. (Visit barlouie.com to view a menu.) Why not join us for a convivial get-together over a delicious meal? Good food and

good fellowship – what more could you want? Please ring Joyce Perlberg on **410 252 2680** to make your reservation; she will need a final count by the 13th.

FROM PASTORAL CARE

Red Cross Blood Drive

The Red Cross is in desperate need of blood donations at this time of year, and your generous contribution of an arm- or legful could help save a life. The parish's next Red Cross blood drive will take place at St Stephen's on Tuesday, 21 July from 2.00–7.30pm. To schedule your exsanguination, please contact Happy Riley on **410 560 6776**.

FROM THE MUSIC OFFICE

Now hiring choirboys – apply today!

Saint Stephen's Choir Academy, the voice-training programme which provides the choristers for our parish choir, is looking for new recruits. If you know a family member, neighbour, or random kid on the street who enjoys singing, wishes to receive a *free* classical music education, and who might be interested in earning a stipend in the process, please contact the Admissions Director, Mrs Cheryl Nickol, on **410 329 6399** or at admissions@choiracademy.org

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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www.ststeve.com

The Ven. Canon Guy P. Hawtin, *Rector*
The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki, *Associate Rectors*
The Rev. Mr M. Wiley Hawks, *Deacon* · Adric, *Magister Chori*
Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8 am: Said Eucharist
9.15 am: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)
11 am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)
6 pm: Choral Evensong (as announced: evensong.ststeve.com)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6 pm: Evening Prayer
Friday, 12 noon: Healing Eucharist
Saturday, 5 pm: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Mondays, 6.30 pm: Bridge Club
Tuesdays, 7 am: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)
Thursdays, 10 am: Knitting Circle
Fridays, 10.30 am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Wednesday, 15 July, 12 noon:
The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Bar Louie
Thursday, 16 July, 2 pm:
Afternoon Tea
Tuesday, 21 July, 2.00–7.30 pm:
Red Cross Blood Drive

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen's Anglican Church
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