

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH • TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

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FROM THE RECTOR

Mainstream media just doesn't get it

It is more than a little irritating to be patronised by people less well-read, well-travelled and, arguably, less intelligent than oneself. But I confess the mainstream media manages to do so on a daily basis – particularly in the realm of religion, for which read 'Christianity'.

When, for example, Christianity is discussed in print, television, and movies it is usually treated as 'vain superstition'. Yet it is plain that few of the faith's media critics have spent much time pondering the transcendental – far less time than they devote to studying the wine lists at their favourite watering holes.

This is evident from the way they talk about Christians – e.g. the Washington Post's contemptuous dismissal of evangelical Christians as 'poor, uneducated and easy to command'.

A swift glance at the vehicles in the average mega-church parking lot gives the lie to claims that the worshippers are poor, and also serves to undermine the claim they are ill-educated and easily led.

It is instructive that the Media invariably treats Moslems with kid gloves. Could the disparity be explained by the fact that Christians are not prone to launch murderous attacks against journalists, et al. who behave in ways that offend them? But I digress . . .

In any event, parishioner George Michaels who is as irritated by the mainstream media's supercilious attitude to almost anything that might be construed as traditional American values, recently mailed me to following article by actor Kevin Sorbo. I would like to share it with you.

When more than 1,000 New Yorkers rose to their feet to sing 'Amazing Grace' in Broadway's historic Nederlander Theater, it was difficult to stave off the tears. The play by the same name as the beloved hymn tells the story of songwriter John Newton's conversion and fight to end the slave trade. It has everything that critics want—a rapturous love story, soaring score, jaw-dropping special effects, and a Tony-quality cast.

But unsurprisingly, the mainstream media was not impressed.

Charles Isherwood of *The New York Times* called the play 'an over-stuffed history lesson trimmed in melodrama.' And *Variety* deemed it 'tough sledding.' But as I think back to the tears flowing down so many cheeks in the room (I cried through the whole performance), I wonder why faith-based entertainment continues to baffle, ruffle, and enrage the mainstream media.

All of this feels oddly familiar. Last year, I starred in an independent-film titled *God's Not Dead*. It scored a measly 16 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, a website which aggregates and averages the reviews of major film critics. The critics slaughtered it with impunity. But moviegoers, and especially religious consumers, found it to be a breath of fresh air. It earned a staggering \$70 million in domestic box office sales and millions more in DVD sales, digital downloads, and merchandising making *God's Not Dead* the highest grossing independent film of 2014.

Our experience is not uncommon.

In 2008, the faith-based film *Fireproof* from the relatively unknown filmmaking brothers Alex and Stephen Kendrick earned a 'rotten rating' of 40 percent, but earned more than \$33 million. In 2011, the same duo released the film *Courageous*, which was given a measly 30 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, but generated more than \$34 million. And in 2014, Sony's *Heaven is For Real* also got a 'rotten rating' of 46 percent while earning a staggering \$91.4 million in domestic box office sales.

You can expect this trend to continue as most major movie studios are actively developing similarly faithful projects. This summer, for example, Sony will release *War Room*, a film by the Kendricks that explores the power of prayer. With over 4 million trailer views so far, expect this film to 'shock' Hollywood critics once again.

Critics might tell you that the people supporting and seeing these films just don't know what good art is. They see themselves as the gatekeepers of how to tell a good story in film, television, and theater. But I think these films are lost on elitist critics because they don't understand the deep spiritual impulses these shows are exploring. And they have lost touch with the millions of consumers who continue to purchase tickets despite critics' warnings.

The mainstream media just doesn't get faith-based entertainment because they don't have faith. And they don't understand people of faith.

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 REPOSE OF SOUL: Ned

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, Paula, Sandra, Diane, Hobie, Nathan, Francine, Susan, Holly, Hayley, John

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

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

Unfortunately for them, the box office belongs to audiences, not elitist critics writing from their ivory Manhattan towers. It belongs to working mothers who want to raise their children with a strong sense of values and devoted fathers who are coaching softball games after a long day on the job. It belongs to regular people in small towns and flyover states and middle-class suburban neighborhoods who are struggling with how to live meaningful lives in an ever-changing society.

If critics want to meet these Americans, they can walk into a church on any given Sunday and listen to their stories. Their tales of faith and redemption sound something like this: 'Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found, was blind but now I see.'

Until critics understand *these* types of stories, they'll continue to misunderstand faith-based entertainment.

Award-winning actor Kevin Sorbo starred in Hercules: The Legendary Journeys, among the most-watched TV shows in history. He earned the Grace Award-Most Inspiring Movie Acting for his role in What If ... , and was featured in the hit film Soul Surfer. Most recently, he played the title role in Abel's Field which launched in-store and online DVD sales Jan. 22. For more information, visit AbelsField.com

FROM THE PARISH TEA PARTY

August Afternoon Tea arrives early

We continue to serve our popular Afternoon Teas throughout the summer months on the Third Thursday of the month at 2pm. Next month, however, the Tea will move ahead two weeks to **6 August**. A sign-up sheet will be available in the church office, or you can contact Anne Hawkins on **410 913 7405** or anne.hawkins@me.com

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.

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.

SAINT STEPHEN'S  CHOIR ACADEMY

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TUITION

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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)
Wednesdays, 6.30 pm: Silly Summer Suppers
Thursdays, 10 am: Knitting Circle
Fridays, 10.30 am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Thursday, 6 August, 2 pm:
Afternoon Tea (*two weeks earlier!*)
Wednesday, 19 August, 12 noon:
The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Pappa's

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
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