

# 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

### TV's political debates as gladiatorial combat

A cynical acquaintance in the newspaper business used to contend that elections were America's take on the Roman art of gladiatorial combat. The difference, he claimed, was that the Roman version left rather less blood on floor of the arena.

Were he alive today, he would, doubtless, cite the current run up to next year's Presidential Election as proof positive of the validity of his observation. Certainly, this year's race has been, for the contenders from both parties, a particularly ugly affair.

Media commentators generally seem to be of the opinion that the reason for this is that the electorate is thoroughly disenchanted with the apparent inability of the governing class to govern. Probably they are right, although, frankly, it might be persuasively argued that the less Washington does, the better.

Be that as it may, the legislative gridlock in Washington is by no means accidental. Blame (if that is the appropriate word) for the stalemate lies largely with the U.S. Constitution. And, indeed, it is how the Founding Fathers intended it to work.

America is not a democracy. It is a representative republic – a rather different sort of animal. The Founding Fathers recognised that 51 percent of the electorate, with a propensity for trampling on the rights and aspirations of the other 49 percent, would be no less tyrannical than a king or dictator.

They set out to design a Constitution which would protect the rights of both the majority and the minority with a system of checks and balances that virtually mandates a need for compromise to get anything done.

Thus, if any group is to blame for the gridlock, it is the very members of the electorate – the 'bases' of both parties – who philosophically reject utterly the concept of compromise, rather than the politicians who are obliged to cater to them in order to win the nomination. In effect, it is a case of tails wagging dogs.

The real blame for this electoral intransigence lies with an education system that appears to have almost entirely abandoned America's tradition of teaching civics.

How many kids in recent years, for example, have been taught how government on the federal, state and local levels works?

How many kids have been taught how to compose by-laws for social clubs, sports organisations, and taxpayers' group?

How many have been taught the rudiments of debate, and are familiar with Robert's Rules of Order?

And how many have been told that such knowledge might be important in their adult lives? Very few, I'll warrant.

A consequence is that younger members of the electorate often have only the sketchiest idea of what they can reasonably expect their elected representatives to accomplish in office. Lamentably, the same is true of not only of many political candidates and office holders, but the media that reports on their doings.

The media's ignorance and ineptitude was on display – in glorious Technicolor -- during the recent televised Republican debate.

Instead of providing the viewers with an opportunity to assess the candidates' policy differences and debating abilities, the Cable News Network interviewers deliberately set them at each other's throats.

The result was not a debate, but a political reality show: a verbal blood bath from which few emerged with their dignity intact – least of all the TV anchor people who moderated the event.

Obloquy, however, cannot be confined solely to the CNN crew. The earlier prime-time TV debate hosted by Fox News, while not quite in the same league as the CNN affair, was none-the-less an unedifying debacle, reminiscent more of a blood sport than a civilised debate.

The journalists involved in these travesties are not ill-educated dolts. They are all sophisticated people with impressive resumes, packed with accomplishments. Thus, it is difficult to divine what persuades them that such performances somehow advance the democratic process.

Ratings – the altar upon which all the networks metaphorically sacrifice their first born – are probably part of the answer. The Fox people were cock-a-hoop at the size of the audience for their debate. The CNN people, only marginally less so. There is nothing so good for ratings as a major slugfest.

A further explanation lies in the curious self-absorption that

increasingly characterises American life. It is particularly evident in the media and the entertainment business. Indeed, as far as TV is concerned, it is getting difficult to distinguish between news and entertainment.

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, Professor H. Marshall McLuhan, the Canadian philosopher of communication theory, coined and popularised the expressions 'the medium is the message' and 'the global village.' (He also predicted the World Wide Web almost 30 years before it was invented.)

McLuhan died in 1980, but were he alive today, he might well be tempted to coin yet another catchy truism – 'the messenger is the medium.'

At one time, journalists prided themselves in simply being observers and reporters. Use of the first person singular in a news story was unthinkable – a total anathema.

Back in the heyday of newspapers and radio, 'by-lines' were rarely awarded, even for exceptional work. Great newspapers like The Times of London eschewed them completely. The greatest accolade a reporter could hope for was known in newspaper slang as a 'booc line' – 'By Our Own Correspondent.'

When personal by-lines began to appear in the serious press, they were treated with some derision. We would make spoof universal lead paragraphs using the first person singular.

## 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, Cal, Finton, Phyllis, Edie, Adele, Linda, Elizabeth, Shelby, Melissa, Sandra, Ralph, Nathan, Hobie, Hayley, John, Nancy, Gloria, Judy, Pam, Fran, Neal

**FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE:** Stephen, Melba, Scott, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Ned

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

My personal favourite was: 'I stood by helpless as . . . pick up agencies' – i.e. the reports of the event from Reuters, AP and UPI. It could be used for almost any happening from a terrorist attack to the Federal Reserve raising the discount rate.

Perhaps the most memorable use of this device was by the great Sunday Times of London correspondent Murray Sayle, who employed it to win a wager with BBC correspondent Brian Baron during the Vietnam War.

Baron, a very fast news writer, bet Sayle that he would be the first to file a story after the two arrived in Saigon. At the airport Baron looked after the bags while Sayle dashed into the restroom. He was back in less than three minutes and the pair shared a taxi to the Reuters office where they both had desks.

Immediately, Baron hit the typewriter. A mere ten minutes later, 400 crisp words were on the way to London. Sayle, meanwhile, had not completed a paragraph.

'Okay, hand over the money, Murray,' Baron demanded.

'No,' replied Sayle, 'You hand over the money, Brian. I filed at the airport.' To prove it, he presented the disbelieving Baron with a note pad on which was scrawled: 'Dateline Saigon: As I flew into this war torn city last night . . . pick up agencies.'

Both Sayle and Baron thought it a hoot and, self-deprecatingly, regaled newsmen's watering holes with the story for years. Today's Solons of the news media take themselves far too seriously to indulge in such irreverence. And more's the pity for that. **GPH**

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

# The Sunday School needs your help!

The Sunday School has been blessed with many new children this year. We need some extra help with our toddlers during the 9.15 Sunday service. Please sign up in the Cadwalader Room for the Sundays you are able to help. Many hands make light work! **DIANE NOVICKI**

ON THE KALENDAR

## William Tyndale

William Tyndale was one of the most prominent Protestant reformers at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Tyndale's translation of the Bible was the first English translation to be based on the original Hebrew and Greek texts. (Earlier translations, like Wycliffe's Bible, produced at the end of the fourteenth century, were translations of the Latin Vulgate.) Tyndale's version was also the first to benefit from the availability of the printing press. Tyndale's translation was enormously influential on subsequent translations. Shortly after Tyndale's death, Henry VIII authorised four English translations: the Great Bible, which is essentially Tyndale's work, and three other versions which are derivatives of his work. It is estimated that about 76% of the Authorised Version Old Testament is Tyndale's work, and

83% of the New Testament.

In 1530, Tyndale wrote *The Practyse of Prelates* to oppose Henry VIII's divorce from Catharine of Aragon. Apparently the King held no ill will against Tyndale: when, in 1534, Henry read Tyndale's 1528 *The Obedience of a Christian Man*, he found the rationale he needed to break with the Roman church.

In 1524, Tyndale left England for Europe to further his work. He was seized in Antwerp in 1535 and tried as a heretic. He was condemned to be burned at the stake, but he was strangled before the bonfire was lit. His commemoration is 6 October, which may or may not be the precise date of his death

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

## The Ladies will lunch on 21 October

The Ladies Who Lunch have planned their next outing to a brand new restaurant, **Cu Vino**, on Wednesday, 21 October at noon. Cu Vino is located in the Padonia Shopping Centre at 61 East Padonia Road in Timonium. Why not join them 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 19th.

### St Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093

Office: 410 560 6776 · Rectory: 410 665 1278

Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

[www.ststeve.com](http://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. M. Wiley Hawks, *Priest · 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](http://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, 21 October, 12 noon**

The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Cu Vino

(No Afternoon Tea in October – Teas resume in November)

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Timonium, MD 21093

11856 Mays Chapel Road

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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