

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH • TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

20 October 2015

FROM THE RECTOR

Halloween in Britain: It ain't what it used to be

Today Halloween in Britain is celebrated almost as extravagantly as it is in America. Witches, ghosts, goblins and carved pumpkins now abound on both sides of the Atlantic, but things were quite different when I was a child.

It was not really a time of celebration. In cities and towns, it passed virtually unnoticed. In country districts, superstitious folks stayed home, behind locked doors – for it was the night when souls in torment were said to revisit their earthly homes or the scenes of their undoing.

All Hallows Eve, as it is properly known, was not directly associated with witches until recently, at least in the part of the world where I grew up. The Witches' Sabbath actually took place on April 30th – the eve of the Feast of St Walpurga, an 8th Century German abbess.

It was known as Walpurgis Night, from the Anglo-Saxon version of the German Walpurgisnacht. It was another occasion upon which superstitious country folk stayed safe at home. It was believed to be the high feast of Satan – an occasion for witches and warlocks to gather in secret to worship their diabolical master in savage and blasphemous rites.

One of my favourite stories associated with Walpurgis Night concerns the Hell Fire Club – a bunch of mid-18th Century bucks, also known as the Monks of Medmenham.

The club was avowedly atheistic, and the members, accompanied by hired 'nymphs' and hogsheads of wine, celebrated 'Black Masses' amid the ruins of Medmenham Abbey on an island in the River Thames.

One Walpurgis Night, when Lord Sandwich (inventor of the Sandwich) was scheduled to celebrate the Black Mass, John Wilkes – a radical politician and notorious rake – hid a baboon in the chimney of the ruined refectory behind the satanic altar.

Immediately Sandwich uttered words conjuring up the devil, Wilkes released the baboon. The terrified animal leapt on the no less terrified Sandwich, and the meeting dissolved into chaos, as monks and half-clad 'nymphs' desperately sought to escape the supposed 'satanic hordes'.

The club was never quite the same again. Sandwich never forgave Wilkes, and eventually he sought to have him impeached for allegedly writing seditious and pornographic pamphlets.

Wilkes was brought before the bar of the House of Commons and Sandwich, acting as prosecutor, marshalled the evidence against him.

Apparently, Sandwich was convinced that the case against Wilkes was absolutely watertight, for he ended his presentation with a flourish. 'This man,' he declared, 'is born to die either on the gallows or of an unmentionable disease ...' (Or words to that effect.)

Wilkes immediately leapt to his feet and responded: 'That depends upon whether I embrace your morals, or your mistress.' The House, howling with laughter, voted to dismiss the case against him. Sandwich never got his revenge.

By contrast, May Day, which immediately followed Walpurgis Night, was marked by a rather less sacrilegious celebrations.

In country districts it was often observed with vestiges of Beltane, the Celtic celebration that marked the beginning of summer. In the country, household fires would be doused and re-lit. Morris Dancers would perform on village greens. In cities, there would be working men's galas at which considerable quantities of ale would be drunk.

In some parts of the country, neighbour would gather around bonfires, and civic organisations would sponsor festivities at which whole oxen or pigs would be roasted on spits over open fires.

Halloween, on the other hand, was a time at which local superstitions ruled. One year, for example, playground gossip at my elementary school had it that on All Hallows Eve, at the stroke of one, the spirits all the villagers who would die during the coming year would process around the parish church and disappear through the south door into the nave.

Indeed, a local baker, it was claimed, had gone to the churchyard the previous year to watch the solemn processions of spirits. As the last spirit was about to enter the church, it looked the baker and the poor man found himself gazing at his own face. Shocked, he dropped dead on the spot.

It occurred to us that if the baker had dropped dead of shock, he couldn't have been alive to tell the story. But it was too good a challenge for adventurous young lads to ignore, and a bunch of us decided to find out for ourselves if the story was true.

We crouched amid the graves until the church clock struck one. Sadly, no ghostly procession appeared. We gave it another half hour before going home. But just as the clock struck the half hour, we heard a series of unearthly groans and saw unearthly orange glow emanating from one of the graves.

Our courage vanished, and we fled leaving the devil to take the hindmost.

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: Finton

FOR RECOVERY: Hilarie, Jack, Cal, Phyllis, Edie, Adele, Linda, Elizabeth, Shelby, Melissa, Sandra, Ralph, Nathan, Hobie, Hayley, John, Nancy, Gloria, Judy, Pam, Neal, Will, Aida, Julie

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

Next day at school one of our intrepid band was missing from class, and, to our dismay, we realised we'd left Kenny Lewis to be caught by the ghost.

Kenny was still missing at morning recess when the headmaster and his mother arrived in our classroom looking for him. Sheepishly, we confessed that, in cowardly fashion, we had abandoned him to be taken prisoner by some ghost or demon.

Police Constable Butcher was summoned to investigate. Half an hour later he reappeared with Kenny, who tearfully explained he had spent an uncomfortable night and much of the morning shivering in a newly dug grave.

When the spirits failed to turn up, he'd decided it would be a hoot to jump into the grave with his flashlight and scare the living daylight out of us. No genius, he hadn't figured out that if he succeeded in scaring us out of our wits, it was unlikely there would be anybody to help him out.

Our adventure ended with an ignominious 'six of the best'. On balance, I think celebrating Halloween the American way is a whole lot better. **GPH**✳

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.

FROM THE PARISH TEA PARTY

Afternoon Teas return in November

The increasingly popular Afternoon Teas will be taking a short break for the month of October, but they will return on the third Thursday in November. A sign-up sheet will be made available in a few weeks.

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

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!

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St Stephen's Anglican Church

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Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

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)

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
Sunday, 1 November, 6 pm
Choral Evensong
Thursday, 19 November, 2 pm
Afternoon Tea
Saturday, 6 December, 9 am–1 pm
Cookie Walk

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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