

# 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

### Pray for those who won't pray for the San Bernadino victims

Many people are hot under the collar over the ugly reaction by some in politics and the media to the public officials, including presidential candidates, who declared they would be offering prayers for the victims of the recent Islamic terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California.

Their anger is perfectly justified. No matter one's opinion about the effectiveness of prayer, it was unkind and unfeeling in the extreme to mock and deride an entirely American expression of sympathy for those who had lost their lives in the terrorist attack, as well as the injured and their loved ones.

In retrospect, however, it is not the folks who promised their thoughts and prayers who look foolish, but rather those who attempted to mock and denounce them.

There is, after all, something richly ironic about a self-anointed solon on the New York Daily News copy desk who has never offered a prayer in his life (other, that is, than 'God get me over this hangover and alcohol will never again touch my lips') presuming to advise anyone on the efficacy of prayer.

The same goes for cheesy politicians who apparently see no hypocrisy in denouncing their opponents' offers of prayers when, during every election cycle, they grovel for opportunities to visit churches to solicit votes from the congregants.

In any event, claims that prayers are pointless not only run contrary to at least 5,000 years of human experience, they also run counter to scientific studies that show prayer is most certainly effective. Not least, medical studies show prayer is good for a patient's physical health – patients who were on prayer lists and were regularly prayed for did much better than those who were not.

Funnily enough, the studies indicate that it makes no difference whether or not the people doing the praying know the people they are praying for. The recovery rates improve all the same.

In short, don't assume that just because you don't happen to know the people on St Stephen's prayer list, God doesn't either.

A conclusion to be drawn from this is that the most effective way to deal with the folks who seem intent driving prayer out of public life is to pray for them, just as we should pray for our Islamic enemies.

Knocking our enemies out of our prayers, of course, certainly satisfies our ugly human craving to strike back. The problem is that Christians don't have the option of wreaking vengeance on those who offend them.

Quite the opposite. We are told to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, do good to those who hate us and pray for those who are spiteful to us and persecute us (St Matthew 5:44).

Similarly, we don't have the option to omit from our prayers the politicians and political leaders with whom we disagree. It doesn't matter whether you are for against their policies, offering prayers for those who guide the affairs of the country, whether they see things your way or not, is a solemn Christian obligation.

Indeed, praying for the civil authorities is one of the oldest customs of the Church. Intercessions on behalf of the government, for example, are at the very top of St Paul's priorities in his instructions to St Timothy on how he is to conduct services at the Church in Ephesus.

'I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may live a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty,' he writes (1 Timothy 2:1 & 2).

Moreover, it doesn't matter in the least whether or not the civil authorities in question are Christian, pagan, or even atheist. We're obliged to pray for them no matter what their religious convictions.

'Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers,' writes Paul of the Emperor Claudius (Romans 13:1-7), 'For there is no power but of God ... For he is the minister of God to thee for good ...'

Our Prayer Book's 'Prayer for the President', thus, has a long and honourable history. It was adapted in 1789 from the 'Prayer for the King' in the English Book of Common Prayer.

The original was first published in 1547, predating by two years the Book of 1549 -- the first official Prayer Book to be published in the English Language.

There was a heated debate among the American revisers as to whether

or not it was appropriate for the Church to pray for a U.S. president, who holds office for a limited term, in the same way as it prays for a monarch who holds office for life.

This wasn't a mere matter of semantics. The English Prayer Book contains no 'Prayer for the Country' because the prayer for the reigning monarch is deemed to cover this need.

Canon Norris, a 19th Century Liturgical expert, explained: 'It should be remembered, in all our prayers for the Queen, that we are praying for a blessing, not only on one whom we revere individually, but also on one who represents to our minds our unity and majesty as a nation,' he said.

'When we speak of the head we speak of the whole. In praying God to bless the Sovereign of this realm, we intend to pray for a blessing on our land and nation. Were this not so, it might seem strange that nowhere in our Prayer-book in there a prayer for England.'

## 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:** Wanda, Francine

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

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

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

The argument over prayers for the U.S. president seems to have been settled by Bishop William White. In a letter to Bishop Thomas C Brownell of Connecticut, dated 8 February 1822, he observed scornfully: 'It may be questioned, whether in a government which gives no power commensurate with life, it be congruous to pray for the long life and prosperity of the first Magistrate; but it is contemptible to cavil at the title of "God's servant", as applied to an unbelieving President, when everyone, who understands Greek, knows he is called so in Romans xiii.4.'

The prayers for the president remained in the Prayer Book and they were apparently regarded by Americans in precisely the same way the English viewed the prayers for the monarch – as prayers not just for an individual, but for the well-being of the nation as a whole.

It was not until the 1928 revision that the Church felt it necessary to include a 'Prayer for the Country' in the BCP.

That the prayers for the civil authorities also encompass prayers for the community as a whole raises the question of whether it is appropriate to pray for the civil authorities by name: Barack, the President of the United States; Lawrence, the Governor of this state, etc.

The English have always done so, as have Americans – at least in the days before political partisanship had utterly abolished good manners.

It's entirely appropriate for our national, state and civic leaders to be mentioned by name in our intercessions. To be sure, they symbolise the community as a whole, but they are also individuals set in authority over us.

It makes no difference whether or not we admire them or trust their judgment. By virtue of their office, they take decisions that affect our lives for good or ill.

Actually, the more we mistrust them, the wiser we would be to pray for them. After all, if they won't take advice from us, there's still a chance they'll take it from the Almighty. **GPH**

# Christmas Services

## CHRISTMAS EVE

Thursday, 24 December

**4pm:** Children's Crèche Service

**7pm:** Family Candlelight Eucharist

**10.30pm:** Choral Midnight Mass

## CHRISTMAS DAY

Friday, 25 December

**10am:** Sung Eucharist

## SAINT STEPHEN'S DAY

Saturday, 26 December

**5pm:** Said Eucharist

## CHRISTMAS MEMORIAL FLOWERS

To make a contribution towards the Church Christmas decorations in honour or memory of a loved one, please complete this form and return it with a cheque—payable to **St Stephen's Anglican Church** and marked for **Christmas Flowers**—by 21 December.

Name of Donor: \_\_\_\_\_

Poinsettia colour (*circle one*): RED · WHITE · PINK

Single (6 inches, 5–8 blooms) @ \$12 · # of plants: \_\_\_\_\_

Double (7 inches, 10–12 blooms) @ \$18 · # of plants: \_\_\_\_\_

Triple (RED only, 8 in., 12–18 blooms) @ \$27 · # of plants: \_\_\_\_\_

Total # of plants: \_\_\_\_\_ Total amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is... (*circle one*):

IN HONOUR OF · IN MEMORY OF · IN THANKSGIVING FOR

(*dedication*): \_\_\_\_\_

## 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, The Rev. Robert Ludwig, *Associate Rectors*

The Rev. M Wiley Hawks, *Pastoral Care Chaplain*

Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

### SUNDAY SERVICES

**8am:** Said Eucharist

**9.15 am:** Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

**11 am:** Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

**6pm:** Choral Evensong (1st Sunday) – [evensong.ststeve.com](http://evensong.ststeve.com)

### WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, **6pm:** Evening Prayer

Friday, **12 noon:** Healing Eucharist

Saturday, **5pm:** Family Eucharist

## Calendar of Events

### WEEKLY

**Monday, 6.30pm:** Bridge Club

**Tuesday, 7am:** Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

**Thursday, 10am:** Knitting Circle

**Friday, 10.30am:** Bible Study

### MONTHLY & SPECIAL

**Wednesday, 16 December, 12 noon**

The Ladies Who Lunch: Christmas Lunch at Bluestone

**Thursday, 17 December, 2pm**

Afternoon Tea

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

St Stephen's Anglican Church  
11856 Mays Chapel Road  
Timonium, MD 21093

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