

St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

29 March 2016

FROM THE RECTOR

Searching for the truth among 'urban legends'

Folk myths of the type known today as 'urban legends' have fascinated me since the day grandfather told me that if you hold a guinea pig up by its tail its eyes will fall out. The fact that guinea pigs do not have tails, and thus there is no way of testing the theory, in no way lessened the legend's appeal.

I did, however, succeed in putting another classic urban legend to the test: It is, indeed, possible to catch a bird by putting salt on its tail ... providing the bird in question is a chicken. But as in those days I could catch a chicken without the aid of salt, I guess my experiment didn't prove very much.

One of the most persistent relatively modern urban legends concerned a lady in California ... or was it Florida ... or maybe even Colorado ... who washed her toy poodle and popped him into the microwave to dry him off. The result, of course, was cooked dog.

As far as I can determine, there isn't a word of truth to it, but this doesn't stop it circulating.

Some urban legends, though utterly untrue, achieve remarkable degree of acceptance. Boston's New England Aquarium, for example, was obliged to call a press conference to assure the public that all of the institution's 61 penguins were present and accounted for. This was because a persistent rumour had it that a 12-year-old autistic boy had made off with one of the birds in his backpack.

The aquarium, which had received hundreds of emails and phone calls from all over the country about the alleged penguin theft, labeled the tale 'a 100 percent certifiable urban legend'.

According to the legend, the boy had gotten lost while visiting the penguin habitat with his mother. He seemed quite agitated when she found him, so when they arrived home she drew him a warm bath to calm him down.

After a while, she heard loud splashing noises coming from the bathroom and she went in to check. She discovered her son in the company of a full-grown penguin. He admitted sneaking the bird home in his backpack.

Aquarium officials pointed out that catching a penguin would have been quite impossible – even with the aid of salt apparently. The penguin pool is six feet deep and the slippery birds 'fly' through the water at astonishing speeds.

Another avian legend involves scientists at NASA who, according to the story, have developed a gun for shooting dead chickens at the windshield of airline jets, military jets, and even the space shuttle. The purpose is to determine whether the windshields are capable of withstanding airborne collisions with birds.

British engineers, so the legend goes, tried out the gun on the windshields of their new high-speed trains. On firing it, however, the Brits watched in shock as the chicken shattered the windshield, smashed through the control console, snapped the engineer's back rest in two, and embedded itself into the rear wall of the cabin.

Horrified and puzzled, the engineers sent NASA the results of the experiment, along with the designs of the windshield, and asked the NASA scientists for any suggestions. The NASA scientists sent back a brief response: 'Thaw the chicken.'

It turns out that the 'chicken cannons' are real enough and are still used by aeronautics engineers to fire poultry at test aircraft. There's no evidence, however, that the Brits have used them to fire frozen poultry at anything.

By contrast, recent news reports from Florida lend a modest degree of credibility to an urban legend involving an alligator and some golfers.

It purportedly took place at a golf course in Florida where the first foursome of the day played together to the fifth hole. At this point, one impatient golfer went ahead of the group.

The remaining three finished their round and headed for the 19th hole to meet their less-patient friend. However, he wasn't there, even though his car was still in the parking lot. The threesome waited for two hours, but their friend still didn't show up.

Thinking the impatient golfer might still be somewhere out on the course, they notified the clubhouse and the search was on. The impatient golfer was nowhere to be found, although his clubs were discovered abandoned at the seventh hole.

Three days later, Ole Mose the alligator was spotted at the seventh hole and immediately fell under suspicion. Ole Mose had been an occasional visitor to the course for over 20 years. but nobody worried much about him because he always beat a hasty retreat whenever he saw someone coming.

Eventually, so the story goes, it was decided to open up Old Mose just to

put everyone's mind at rest. Inside, they made a gruesome discovery – the remains of the impatient golfer.

Photograph circulating on the Internet are purported to be a record of the autopsy. Experts claim the photographs are genuine but they say the unfortunate person found in belly of the beast could not have met his untimely end on a Florida golf course.

The pictures are not of an alligator at all, but of a crocodile native to Indonesia.

Another persistent legend also concerns alligators: Thirty or forty years ago, so the story goes, New Yorkers returning from vacations in Florida to brought back baby alligators for their children to raise as pets. When they'd outgrown their cuteness, their owners would flush them down the toilet.

According to legend, the hardy creatures went forth and multiplied, populating the dank Manhattan sewer system with colonies of blind, albino alligators.

This legend has apparently been circulating about New York City for the better part of a century. However, it does have a tiny grain of truth to it in as much as an eight-foot alligator was rescued from an East Harlem manhole in 1935.

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, Cal, Phyllis, Edie, Bill, Terry, Helen, Jim, Adele, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Tom, Rosemary, Robert, David, Jan, Susie, Beth, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Pam

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

All this brings me to my most recently acquired urban legend – forwarded to me years ago by Father Wiley Hawks. Here it goes:

They walked in tandem, each of the ninety-two students filing into the already crowded auditorium. With rich maroon gowns flowing and the traditional caps, they looked almost as grown up as they felt. Dads swallowed hard behind broad smiles, and Moms freely brushed away tears.

This class would not pray during the commencements – not by choice, but because of a recent court ruling prohibiting it.

The principal and several students were careful to stay within the guidelines allowed by the ruling. They gave inspirational and challenging speeches, but no one mentioned divine guidance and no one asked for blessings on the graduates or their families.

It was all routine ... until the final speech received a standing ovation. A solitary student walked proudly to the microphone. He stood still and silent for just a moment, and then, it happened.

All 92 students – every single one of them – suddenly SNEEZED!!!!

The student on stage simply looked at the audience and said, 'GOD BLESS YOU, each and every one of you!' And he walked off stage.

The audience exploded into applause. The graduating class found a unique way to invoke God's blessing on their future with or without the court's approval.

The folks who circulated the story swore that the story was true, claiming: 'It happened at the University of Maryland.'

But then they would, wouldn't they? Still, as my brother Mike used to say, 'If it isn't true, it ought to be.' GPH✘

FROM THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Vacation Bible School 2016

St Stephen's Vacation Bible School, for children ages 4–10, will take place once again this summer during the week of 20–24 June from 9am–Noon. The cost is \$20, and there are scholarships available upon request. This year's theme is *Creation Days*. We will explore the seven days of Creation in the Book of Genesis. Please phone the church office on 410 560 6776 and speak to Happy Riley to begin your child's registration. We hope you will bless us with your children, and please have them bring a friend!

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

The Ladies will lunch on the 20th

The Ladies Who Lunch will convene at the **Outback Steakhouse** on Wednesday, 20 April at noon. The Outback is located 134 Shawan Road, in the southeast corner of the Hunt Valley Towne Centre. 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 18th.

SAINT STEPHEN'S  **CHOIR ACADEMY**

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ChoirAcademy.org

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, 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

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

Monday, 6.30 pm: Bridge Club
Tuesday, 7 am: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)
Thursday, 10 am: Knitting Circle
Friday, 10.30 am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Wednesday, 20 April, 12 noon
The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Outback Steakhouse
Saturday, 7 May, 11.30 am–4 pm
St Stephen's British Garden Party & Fête

There will be no Afternoon Teas offered in April or May

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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