

# St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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*A parish in the classical Anglican tradition*

8 March 2016

## FROM THE RECTOR

### Rome's martyrs got what was coming to them

It has become a tradition over the past few decades for anti-Christians in politics, the media and academia to declare open season on the Christian Faith during the run up to the most important festivals in the Church year. So steel yourselves for a barrage of incoming fire that will intensify as Easter approaches.

Hostility toward religion in America has increased dramatically in recent years, according to First Liberty Institute, an organisation dedicated to upholding and defending the First Amendment.

The institute has recently issued a report documenting some 1,285 cases of overt hostility and discrimination against Christians – the mere tip of an iceberg, as a glance at the TV nightly news amply illustrates.

'These cases ... show a clear expansion during this past year,' the report said. 'Quantitatively and qualitatively, the hostility is undeniable. And it is dangerous.'

Cases reported by the institute fall into four basic categories: attacks in the public arena, attacks in the schoolhouse, attacks against churches and ministries, and attacks in the military.

The victims were drawn from a broad spectrum of American life, including private citizens, members of the military, schoolteachers, business owners, public officials, clergy and members of religious orders.

They were harassed, ridiculed and penalised over a wide range of activities deemed 'politically incorrect' – ranging from praying in public to proselytising (routinely practiced by atheists) and answering children's questions about the Bible, to refusing to serve same sex couples and objecting to providing health insurance that covers contraception services.

Examples cited by the institute included: a football coach suspended for privately saying after-game prayers; a teacher dismissed for answering a question from a student about the Bible and using a Bible to illustrate the point; and cheerleaders banned from quoting the Bible on their banners.

Other cases involved public officials disciplined for things said and done on their own time and at their own churches; and a senior Air Force master sergeant was relieved of his duties and charged with making false official statements for reluctantly declaring that he believed in 'the biblical view of marriage'.

The institute also mentioned efforts in a number of states to ban the display of the Ten Commandments and invocations at public events that make mention of Christian sentiments.

By no means all Christians share all the beliefs of those who have been penalised and suffered hostility – on same-sex marriage and contraception, for example. But the First Amendment guarantees freedom of expression for all points of view – not solely in matters of religion.

An attack on one is, thus, an attack on all. And, according to the institute, the number of discrimination and hostility cases has more than doubled since the end of President Obama's first term in 2012.

'The religious liberty of Americans is under attack like never before,' said Kelly Shackelford, the institute's chief counsel, 'These attacks . . . [have] the potential to wash away the ground that supports our other rights, including freedom of speech, press, assembly, and government by consent of the people.'

Not all of the attacks on the faith take the form of displays of hostility and discrimination against groups and individuals. Some are rather more oblique and insidious.

One of the most egregious examples of this sort of attack occurred on Maryland Public Television some 10 years ago. It took place during a program about the inferno that destroyed most of Rome in AD 64.

The presenters contended, on the basis of no persuasive evidence, that the city was torched by Christians and not, as the contemporary chronicler Tacitus recorded, by the sociopathic Emperor Nero.

According to Tacitus, Nero had both the motive and the means to

set the fire. He had made it no secret that he harboured the ambition to rid Rome of its shabby wood and plaster tenements in order to rebuild his capital city in marble and gold leaf.

The fire, Tacitus records, was plainly the work of arsonists and suspicion naturally fell upon Nero. In order to deflect blame, the chronicler states, Nero made the city's Christian community his scapegoats and launched a vicious persecution killing tens of thousands of innocent people.

Men, women and children were torn asunder by wild animals in the Circus Maximus (today the site of the Vatican). Others, including St Peter, were coated in pitch, crucified and burned as human torches to light banquets in Nero's gardens.

However, according to Maryland Public Television, Tacitus, Nero's near contemporary, got things wrong. The emperor was right to blame the Christians, who were incited to burn down Rome by denunciations of the sort contained in the Book of the Revelation of St John.

## 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, 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

**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

In other words, from the perspective of the publicly-funded MPT programmers, the Christian martyrs of Rome simply got what was coming to them.

Even so, one might reasonably ask why MPT chose Passion Week as the appropriate time to air such highly controversial allegations. Probably it was for the same reason that many media outlets consider the Easter season the right time to denounce Johann Sebastian Bach's St Matthew's Passion as anti-Semitic.

Kelly Shackelford of First Liberty Institute blames the hostility on a 'relatively small but powerful sector of society composed of influential people and organisations who consider active faith as irrelevant at best, and dangerous to essential social progress at worst.'

One must ask: Is America prepared to sacrifice the benefits of open religious activity on the altar of modern political correctness?

But is it possible to put a price on those benefits? Noted social historian Dr Rodney Stark of Baylor University says you can.

He conducted a comprehensive analysis of the positive impact of religion in the United States in terms of reducing crime, improving education, bettering mental and physical health, increasing employment and reducing welfare.

Religion – largely Christianity – Dr Stark concluded, benefitted the country to the tune at least \$2.67 trillion per year, repeat \$2.67 trillion. That's three times the value of Washington's failed \$800 million program.

This might help explain the rough ride this year's presidential candidates are getting. **GPH**

FROM THE PARISH TEA PARTY

## Afternoon Teas resume on 10 March

Saint Stephen's Afternoon Teas will resume on Thursday, 10 March at 2pm. We left January and February off the 2016 calendar as inclement weather has presented problems in past years.

Another change to note: The Afternoon Teas will now be served on the *second* Thursday of the month, rather than the third, to avoid clashing with the meetings of the Ladies Who Lunch.

Lastly, we have decided that rather than set a fixed price of \$10 for our teas, we will continue with a unrestricted free-will donation.

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

## The Ladies will lunch on the 16th

The Ladies Who Lunch will convene at the **Padonia Ale House** on Wednesday, 16 March at noon. The Ale House is located at the far end of the Padonia Shopping Centre at 61 East Padonia Rd 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 14th.

## Easter Flowers

Here is the selection of beautiful spring flowers to decorate the church for Easter. Please make your choice and return this form with your check to the church office no later than **Wednesday, 23 March**. Flowers may be taken home after the 11am service on Easter Day.

(# of plants)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Daffodils (6" pot) @ \$10**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Field Azaleas @ \$15**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Hyacinths (6" pot) @ \$10**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Hydrangeas (four plus blooms) @ \$20**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Lilies (small elite 6", 4-6 blooms) @ \$10**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Tulips (6" pot) @ \$10**

**Your name:** \_\_\_\_\_

My gift is made...

(circle one): In Honour of · In Memory of · In Thanksgiving for

**Dedicatee:** \_\_\_\_\_

## 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

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

**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, 9 March, 6.45 pm**

Lenten Studies

**Thursday, 10 March, 2 pm**

Afternoon Tea

**Wednesday, 16 March, 12 noon**

The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Padonia Ale House

**Sunday, 20 March – Sunday, 27 March**

Holy Week and Easter

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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

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