

# St Stephen's News

ST STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

Volume XXVII, Number 19

*A parish in the classical Anglican tradition*

31 May 2016

## FROM THE RECTOR

### A bold initiative to pack the pews empties them

It is a sobering commentary on the contrariness of fate that the spiritual train wreck currently emptying America's mainline churches started life 60 years ago as a bold new initiative aimed at packing the pews.

The 1950s Organisation Man was giving way to the Beat Generation and the world stood at the threshold of the Swinging Sixties. The churches, struggling for relevance in an era of rock and roll, easy sex and recreational drug use, set out to entice 20-somethings to 30 somethings back to the communion rail.

What was needed, the churches' intellectual elite prescribed, was modern music and 'swinging' liturgies young people could 'relate to'.

All in all, the strategy was about as successful, and as embarrassing, as my parents' efforts at dancing 'the Twist'. Come to think of it, it was one heck of a lot less successful and an awful lot more embarrassing – which is saying a very great deal.

Liturgies ran from the mawkishly dull through the mawkishly banal to the mawkishly dull and banal. And the less said about the banshee wailing of singing nuns the better.

Predictably enough, a vast majority of the 20 something to 30 something target audience remained conspicuously absent, while folks who normally filled the pews increasingly found refuge from the cacophony in places like the golf course.

Sadly, all this damage was done in the vain hope of attracting a group of people who for more than 100 years had shown less and less inclination to attend church.

Repeal of the so-called 'Blue Laws,' which kept shops and places of entertainment shuttered on the Sabbath Day, was certainly a main contributory factor. Stores, movie houses, bars and dance halls offered lively competition to sonorous sermons.

Doubtless, improved health care also played a role. Churches are invariably filled in times of great danger – a phenomenon most recently noted immediately after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center.

Rapid strides in medicine particularly during the latter half of the 20th Century have fostered among westerners under the age of, say, 35 what amounts to a sense of immortality.

Barring accidents and acts of war, a vast majority of them can expect to see their 40th birthdays – and what's the point of attending church if you're immortal?

One might imagine that after a decade or so of failed experimentation, the churches' leadership might have decided that it would be wise to throw in the towel, return to the old way that worked better, and analyse the nature of the debacle.

But that's not the human way of doing things. Instead, they forged ahead with their failed program, piling theological and liturgical innovation upon innovation.

The upshot was that when the original members of the target audience were ready to return to the churches of their youth – namely, when they ceased to be immortal 20 somethings to 30 somethings – they found the churches so changed as to be unrecognisable.

As a consequence, many drifted back to the golf course; others to easy-going, non-denominational churches, more genuinely in tune with popular culture.

The trouble with this is that Jesus Christ's Church is not, and should never seek to be, in tune with the popular culture. The church is a divine and eternal institution with a human mission, not – as so many folks today seem to assume – a human institution with a divine mission that is ultimately finite.

Jesus Christ's Church is 'in' the world, but not 'of' it. It is the one changeless rock in a world of constant change. It is the sole repository of the eternal truth, our sole source of certitude and, thus, our sole source of true solace.

## 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:** Cal

**FOR RECOVERY:** Hilarie, Phyllis, Edie, Jim, Adele, Linda, Judy, Neal, Sheila, Nelson, Aida, Nathan, Hobie, Eunice, Raymond, Rosemary, Todd, Sophia, Bobby, Pam, Charlotte, Nancy, Ellen, Mary, Janet, Bea, Kelley, Mike

**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

On the national and local levels, our churches should reflect this changelessness and certitude without which there can be no solace. And this cannot be achieved with a constantly changing liturgy, polity and theology.

To be sure, the Church needs, as the Prayer Book puts it, to speak 'in a language understood of the people'. But this does not mean its language has to reflect that of television soap operas or the back of government forms. Far from it.

At worship, we are addressing the most mighty being in existence – a being whose power renders even the 'shock and awe' capability of the U.S. Armed Forces utterly insignificant. Our language and our behaviour should reflect this.

It is an aspect of God that is all too frequently overlooked in an age more attuned to singing 'What a friend we have in Jesus'.

True, Jesus is our friend, but he's not the sort you'd invite to a bar for a couple of martinis and a hand or two of gin rummy.

GPH\*

FROM THE PARISH TEA PARTY

## Afternoon Teas resume on 9 June

Saint Stephen's Afternoon Teas will resume on Thursday, 9 June at 2pm.

We left April and May off the 2016 calendar as Holy Week and the Garden Party are busy times for the church. The Afternoon Teas are served on the second

Thursday of the month. There is no fixed price for our teas, however free-will donations

are accepted. We are only able to comfortably serve 40 guests, so we ask that you please make a reservation using the sign up sheet in the main reception area, leaving your name and a contact number. If you later find yourself unable to attend, please contact the Parish Office immediately so we can offer your place to the next person on the standby list.



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 MUSIC OFFICE

## Now hiring choirboys – apply today!

Saint Stephen's Choir Academy, the voice-training programme which provides the boy choristers for our parish choir, is looking for new recruits. If you know a any boys between the ages who enjoys singing, wishes to receive a *free* classical music education, and who might be interested in getting paid in the process, please contact the Admissions Director, Mrs Cheryl Nickol, on **410 329 6399** or at [admissions@choiracademy.org](mailto:admissions@choiracademy.org)

### 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

**Sunday, 5 June, 6 pm**

Choral Evensong

**Thursday, 9 June, 2 pm**

Afternoon Tea

**Tuesday, 14 June, 7-8 pm**

Parish Life Meeting

**Monday-Friday, 20-24 June, 9 am-Noon**

Vacation Bible School

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Timonium, MD 21093

11856 Mays Chapel Road

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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