

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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FROM THE RECTOR

Nothing is “common” about commonsense

Commonsense was once as American as mom’s apple pie. Even so, it has never been particularly common – though in times past it was by no means as rare a commodity as it is today.

Indeed, *Common Sense* was a driving force behind the American Revolution. It was the title of Tom Paine’s pamphlet that between 1775/1776 inspired an unlikely coalition of gentry, professional classes, townsmen, tradesmen and farmers to band together to throw off the tyranny of the British Crown.

No publication in the history of this country has been read by a larger proportion of the population than Tom Paine’s pamphlet. It has never been out of print and it is still in circulation today.

But even in Paine’s day commonsense was not a notably common commodity. When he arrived here in 1774, just before the Battles of Lexington and Concord, Paine “found the disposition of the people such, that they might have been led by a thread and governed by a reed.”

So he set about remedying the situation with his pamphlet. According to Paine, *Common Sense* sold 120,000 copies in the first three months. It is estimated that 500,000 copies were sold in the first year, with the pamphlet circulating widely not only in America, but also Britain and France.

It is reckoned, all told, that *Common Sense* went through twenty-five published editions in the first year alone. In terms of circulation and impact, it is calculated that an equivalent sale today, based on the present population of the United States, would be more than six-and-one-half million copies in three months.

The reason *Common Sense* enjoyed such a wide circulation was that it put forward a carefully constructed argument for independent, egalitarian government – a concept which up to that point had not been seriously considered.

Paine presented his case in straightforward, unadorned prose. And while it was passionately argued, Paine sought to persuade his readers by the logic of his arguments rather than merely appealing to their emotions. His fundamental point was that striving for independence was simply a matter of commonsense.

He succeeded brilliantly. Seldom has any political publication had such a salutary effect. It was a catalyst in transforming America’s dispute with Britain from what was essentially an effort to obtain a redress of grievances to a full-blown declaration of independence.

It is clear from the circulation figures that the pamphlet was clearly not aimed primarily at a small cadre of committed revolutionary radicals, nor was its audience confined solely to America’s intellectual elite. Its appeal was deliberately broad.

Paine sought to present his case to the entire population of the 13 colonies. Thus he made his arguments in the English they used on a daily basis – devoid of the jargon of the academic, professional and political classes.

It might not seem that way to readers today. But the average 18th Century man in the street had a far larger active working vocabulary than his 21st Century counterpart’s scant 400 words.

In Paine’s day, average Americans did not have the advantage of a 21st Century education. They knew less about the technicalities of sex and nothing about computers. But their daily reading included the King James or Geneva Bibles and the Book of Common Prayer and the breadth of their vocabularies reflected it.

Common Sense isn’t much studied in America’s schools and universities these days. And judged by the textbooks in circulation and the undergraduate college courses on offer, it is doubtful that the vast majority of young people today have

even heard of Tom Paine or his pamphlet.

Nor it seems have a majority of today’s politicians, political activists and pamphleteers (*i.e.* the media). At least, judging by the recent Presidential election campaign and the months that have passed since, they have learned nothing at all from it.

Far from seeking to persuade their audiences with logic and carefully constructed arguments, it seems fair to say a majority of them, both left and right, have simply resorted to hyperbolic appeals to baser emotions.

But, then, Tom Paine actually sought to connect with people. In order to do so, he spoke with clarity. There was no mistaking what he had to say, no need to read between the lines because he laid out his ideas unambiguously and without obfuscation.

By contrast, today’s politicians and opinion makers talk over people’s heads, heaping a cacophony of abuse on their opponents instead of debating them, like Paine, on the battlefield ideas.

Eschewing facts and logic, they fight it out with double talk and jargon – such as “Alt-left” and “Alt-right” – that is utterly alien to folks in “flyover country.” Thus political debate so-called often evokes the “Argument Sketch” from *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*.

The problem is that, far from communicating with “the public,”

Timothy, 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: Timothy, Peter, Hilarie, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Bill, Alan, Terry, Helen, Jim, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Tom, Robert✱, David, Jan, Susie, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Courtney, Marie, Joanna, Finnie, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John, David, Adrian & Michell

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Melba, Sam, Vinnie, Doug, Ian, Lisa, Carey, Cindy, Jacob, Casey & Beth

IN MEMORIAM:

THOSE WHO MOURN:

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN; Lt Col. Harry Hughes; Lt Cdr Emma Hawkins, RN; MSGT Michael Holter, USAF; Cpt Fiodor Strikovski, US Army

the politicians and opinion makers are primarily talking across one another to the exclusion of everyone else.

How could it be otherwise when, like Washington politicians, journalists in the mainline media live in cocoons? Not only do they work together, they socialize largely with one another. Any “exchange of ideas” thus tends to be like that in most peer groups, congratulatory and conformist rather than confrontational.

Living in what amounts to a voluntary state of purdah ensures both politicians and media remain smugly out of touch with the aspirations and life struggles of ordinary Americans whom they meet mainly at the end of a microphone – either at a staged “Town Meeting” or a casual “vox pop” on the street.

In these circumstances, is it altogether surprising that Donald Trump – like him or loath him – has for more than a year been running rings around these professional “communicators” with his blunt, ineloquent and occasionally vulgar 140-character Tweets? After all, people actually understand what he saying. And so it is likely to remain until, like Tom Paine, the politicians and opinion makers take up persuasively debating commonsense policies in straightforward, unequivocal and respectful language. GPH✱

Study the roots of the faith

The Books of Genesis and Exodus go to the very core of our faith. Over the past 100 years, however, their value both historically and doctrinally has been increasing questioned. Indeed, many clergy who consider themselves cutting edge theologians shun them as the literary equivalent of mad aunts in the attic. This year’s Lenten Study will examine the first two “Books of Moses” to assess them as historical documents and to consider the contribution they have made to the development of the Christian faith.

Join us for a series of five Wednesday evening studies on this fascinating subject. They will begin at 6.30 pm from March 8th and continue at the same time until Wednesday in Passion Week, April 5th. Each study will be self-contained so you can miss a couple and not feel out of it.

So join us to hear what Adam and Eve have to teach about human nature. Find out about Ur, Abraham’s hometown and why he told Pharaoh that his wife, Sarah, was his sister. Learn how Joseph’s economic policies condemned the children of Israel to slavery. Discover why the Israelites worshipped the Golden Calf.

In addition to food for thought, we shall as ever be offering a hearty soup, the best bread in Baltimore and beverages of your choice. Feel free to bring a sandwich.

Inviting you to a Tea Party on Thursday, March 9th

Tea parties are wonderful affairs for meeting new friends and renewing old acquaintances. It has been a very long time since we have had tea party. Things have been so busy of late we just haven't had the time to prepare for one..

However we are planning to hold a Tea Party on at 2.00 PM on Thursday, March 9th. The only variable is the weather. In case of snow and ice, we shall have to move things to a later date. To reserve your place, call Happy Riley in the Parish Office. Tel: (410) 560-6776.

PARISH YOUTH

Play Group Kickoff

Mark your calendars! The first Parish Youth Play Group will be on Saturday, February 18th, from 2:00 to 4:00 PM. Weather permitting, there will be lots of outdoor activities, such as free play with soccer balls, basketball, and four square. We'll have indoor activities planned if there's rain or snow. There will also be a table set up outside (weather permitting) for fellowship time for the parents.

We're currently looking at having a play group every other Saturday, but we'll discuss this with the group on the 18th to get their input. If you have any questions, feel free to email Carolyn Kerouac at carolyn.kerouac@gmail.com, or Rachael Odengo at raqueloke@yahoo.com.

St Stephen’s Anglican Church

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Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*
 The Venerable Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*
 The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki and
 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
 9.15am: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)
 11am: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)
 6pm: Choral Evensong (as announced) –
 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

Parish Life Committee

Tuesday February 14th, 7.00 pm

Vestry Meeting

Wednesday February 15th, 7.00 pm

Ladies Who Lunch

at Joey Chui's, Greenspring Station,
 Wednesday February 15th, 12.00 pm - 2.00 pm

Parish Tea Party

Thursday, March 9th, 2.00 pm
 RSVP: Happy Riley (410) 560-6776

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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 11856 Mays Chapel Road
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