

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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FROM THE RECTOR

The decline and fall of the American neighborhood

When our children were young, they would routinely lament that we were much stingier and far less permissive than the parents of all their friends – not merely the parents of their closest friends but of their most casual acquaintances.

To hear our kids tell it, their friends' moms and dads not only would never have dreamed of asking their off- spring to perform even the most minor household chores, but constantly lavished huge amounts of pocket money and costly gifts upon them and allowed them to stay out until all hours of the day and night.

Neither Charlotte nor I lost much sleep over our failure to meet the expectations of our children's social set. You see, running reality checks on children's claims was a piece of cake.

We were well acquainted with the parents of most in their classes – either through church, the PTA, the Brownies, the Scouts or the service organizations and clubs of which we were all members. And, as a matter of course, we would regularly compare notes on the amazing descriptions of parental munificence we were reported to have bestowed on our children. Saying "no" is so much easier when you can say: "I know Billy's mommy, and she didn't do anything of the kind."

The benefits accruing from the wide range of acquaintanceships that families build through churches, the PTA and service and social organizations are not merely confined to making it easier to say "no." They foster the shared values that are essential for building a strong sense of community. This, in turn, creates an atmosphere in which parents willingly accept a wider degree of responsibility for the well-being of all the children in their neighborhoods.

At its most basic level, it encourages folks in the neighborhood to help to keep an eye on each other's broods. This sort of neighborly supervision, even if it is simply observation, is an important tool in keeping children from going off track. Shared values and a strong sense of community also make it easier for parents to combine to take action to deal with problems before they reach crisis proportions.

Some neighborhoods still function this way, but in many others the sense of community has vanished. Indeed, no longer can they honestly be described as neighborhoods because the folks who live in them are neighbors only in the sense that they drive the same streets and share the same garbage collector. They don't know each other; still less each other's children.

This should not be entirely surprising – for the churches, groups, clubs and organizations that created and kept alive our sense of community have been in precipitate decline for the best part of four decades.

Participation in parent-teacher associations has fallen by more than 50 per cent over the past 60 years. During the same period, the Red Cross has reported a similarly steep decline, while the number of adults volunteering to lead the Boy Scouts is down by more than a third..

People are not only taking less of an interest in the well-being of each other's children and their fellow men, they are also showing a startling indifference to civic affairs. Over the past 30 years, the number of Americans who reported having attended at least one public meeting annually has declined by a third. Membership of the League of Women Voters has fallen by 40 percent, while membership of the Federation of Women's Clubs has shown an even steeper decline.

The precipitate decline in support for the civic and social organizations that fostered and maintained neighborliness among neighbors cannot be explained as a natural consequence of changed social and economic circumstances – such as the increased participation of women in the workforce – which leave people with less free time on their hands. This simply isn't so. The fact of

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: Peter, Charlotte, Dorothy, Rodney, June, Sarah, Betsy, Edie, Alan, Terry, Helen, Linda, John, Judy, Neal, Aida, Stephen, Nathan, Hobie, Betty, Helen, Eunice, Robert✕, David, Jan, Susie, Sophia, Bobby, Lee, Cary, Cour Marie, Jim, Joanna, Kendall, Ian, Gloria, June, John, David, Adrian, Tom, Michell, Aida, Mai, Al, Kathy, Jack, Lewey, Stephen, Pamela, Isobel, Judy, Elizabeth & Angela

FOR THE REPOSE OF THE SOUL: Ann Thompson
FOR THOSE WHO MOURN: The Thompson Family

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

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

the matter is that people seem to have as much free time as they ever had. It is just that they choose to devote it to selfish pursuits rather than ones that benefit the community.

The attitude of many Americans to themselves and their responsibilities to their fellow citizens has changed radically over the past 30 years. No longer are Americans as naturally gregarious as they once were.

They no longer seem to enjoy participating in team sports as much as they once did. Since 1980, for example, the number of people bowling has increased substantially, while participation in bowling leagues, over the same period, far from increasing, has fallen by heavily. Baseball might still claim to be the "National Pastime."

But, in truth, the title might far more accurately be bestowed on shopping. Just take a look at the average mall.

There is even evidence of the trend in our churches. Clergy publications frequently appear to perceive churchgoers as consumers of religion and approach them as members of an audience in need of entertainment rather than congregants fulfilling their obligation to worship their creator.

A decline in bowling league participation, over crowded malls and changing perceptions of churchgoers are by no means the only signs of the profound change that is overtaking society. One doesn't have to cast one's mind far to find plenty of other indications of our increasing self-absorption.

Our growing enthusiasm for solitary pursuits and our increasing lack of interest in the wider community sets us on a course fraught with danger. As the philosopher Thomas Hobbes' observed, lives that are solitary also tend to be nasty, brutish and short. GPH✳

THE PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE
Serving parish and community

In case you are wondering, the Parish Life Committee is the social and fundraising arm of this church. We plan numerous events to bring parishioners, friends, family and neighbors together and, also, to raise money for our many endeavors..

We pledge to the church the sum of \$12,000 a year. We raise this with events such as the British Garden Party in May, the Cookie Walk in December, and Summer Suppers. Reaching beyond our physical plant, we support others of our community and the world.

The Knitting Circle auction proceeds go to outreach here and abroad. Heifer International receives a gift of a Knitters basket which includes a sheep, a llama, an alpaca and an Angora rabbit. At Jacobs Well receives warm knitted hats and scarves, as well as non-perishable items and cash donations.

The Christ Child Society of Baltimore receives baby blankets, sweaters and toys for their layettes for new mothers and their babies, as well as a cash donation for the many needs of the women and children of Baltimore. And, of course, we knit prayer shawls and squares for those who need comfort.

In addition to our pledge to this church, this year the Parish Life committee was also able to pay for the new Lawn Tractor and the rack for the folding chairs.

We are always looking for more people to join us for new ideas for our mission both here and around the world. Many hands make light work and we have fun doing work with our fellow parishioners. CYNTHIA L. BAKER,

St Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Office: 410 560 6776 · Rectory: 443-425-2420
Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*
The Venerable Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*
The Rev. Michael Belt and The Rev. John Novicki
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: Sung 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
Thursday, 10am: Knitting Circle
Friday, 10.30am: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Candlemas Choral Evensong

Sunday, February 4th, 6..0 pm

Pancake Supper

Tuesday February 13th, 5.00pm

Ash Wednesday Services

February 14th: Holy Communion, Imposition of
Ashes Parish Church: 10 AM & 7 PM
Union Memorial Hospital: 12 Noon

The Ladies Who Lunch

The Peppermill Restaurant

Wednesday, February 21st 12.00 pm

To reserve: Call Sara Douglas 410-560-9026

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