

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

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FROM THE RECTOR

Why not try to take up something for Lent ?

Shrove Tuesday pancake suppers are, for Episcopalians, the last vestige of the old Pre-Lenten carnival -- the veritable orgy of eating, drinking and merry-making that traditionally preceded the forty day fast. Christians in many parts of Europe still observe the Pre-Lenten Carnival; none more so than the Germans who start the carnival season (called *Fasching*) well before Christmas and, from then on, celebrate at frenetic pace until Ash Wednesday.

Lent is one of the oldest of all the Church seasons. Its observance can be traced back to the second century. In very early times, there was no set period for the Lenten Fast. Often, the period of abstinence lasted merely a couple of days.

The emphasis was not on our Lord's trials and sufferings, but on his triumphant resurrection. This was by no means illogical. After all, the focus of the faith has always been concentrated primarily upon the life-giving Resurrection promise.

Lent was, thus, a time of rejoicing rather than penitence. In our language, at least, its name reflects the fact: "Lent" is the Anglo-Saxon word for "spring." Lent only gradually became associated with Christ's Forty Days of Fasting in the Wilderness. It seems that the change in focus took place during the 4th Century.

The earliest surviving reference to associating it with our Lord's Temptation in the Wilderness is to be found in the Festal Letters of St. Athanasius, who played a prominent role in the Council of Nicea of 325 AD. (This was the council that formulated the Nicene Creed.)

Lenten observances have never been uniform throughout the Church. The Eastern Churches spread the season over eight or nine weeks, while we in the West have tended to follow the less extravagant observance of a six-week fast. But if the Lenten Fast in the West is shorter than it was in the East, it was almost certainly more rigorous.

In the days before refrigeration, modern food processing and factory farming, the Lenten season fell at a time when there was generally an acute shortage of food. Meat was hard to find because the cattle – slaughtered and salted or smoked at the end of the summer – had been eaten.

Sheep could not be slaughtered because of the approach of the lambing season. Eggs were unobtainable, because hens were hatching their annual broods. (Ever wondered about the origin of Easter Eggs, Easter Lamb and Easter Chicks? Easter coincided with the reappearance of all three commodities.)

Even fish was in short supply because winter storms made fishing difficult, the majority of the population had little more than grains, vegetables and milk to fall back on.

Things got somewhat better in the 15th Century. Europe's fishermen discovered rich cod fishing grounds off the coasts

of Newfoundland well before 1492 when Christopher Columbus discovered the New World. The cod were so abundant that it was said you could flip them out of the sea with your hat.

The large supplies of dried salt cod that came on to the market enabled the English Church to proclaim Wednesday in addition to Friday as the second fast day of the week. It was not a greatly popular move. However it did give rise to at least one good thing: the Baltimore Coddie.

Lenten abstinences practiced by Christians today are pale in comparison with those of past generations. They accepted, uncomplainingly, basic necessities. We, by contrast, often take Lent as a welcome opportunity to shed the extra poundage accumulated over the Christmas holiday.

In fact, abstinence is often no hardship at all in these days of plenty. A young friend was once asked what she was going to give up for Lent. "Eggs," she replied, without hesitation. Her mother then explained that the child absolutely detested eggs.

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

FOR THE DEPARTED: Goff Clark Cochran
FOR THOSE MOURN: The Cochran 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.

With this in mind, may be the time has come for us to redefine our notions of fasting. To be sure, we shouldn't give up abstaining from our favorite foods, but perhaps we should start taking up things for Lent as well -- something that helps a good cause or puts to good use the money we save by fasting. GPH✘

THE LENTEN SERIES

Christianity's role in forging our Constitution and culture

Love him or loathe him, President Ronald Reagan is remembered for his pithy observations about the state of the nation – and none, it turns out, more chillingly prescient than: “If we ever forget that we are one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”

Judged by the cultural shambles in which we currently live, America's 40th President was speaking no less than the truth. That, at least seems to be the conclusion to be drawn from a survey by [LifeWay Research](#), the research arm of the Southern Baptist Convention.

According to LifeWay, the culture war may be lost and religious liberty might not be that far behind.

Some 70 percent of senior pastors at Protestant churches say religious liberty is on the decline in the United States, while 59 percent of Christians believe they are losing the culture war and 11 percent considers it already lost.

The survey's findings raise "grave concerns about the moral direction of the nation from both the pulpit and the pew," says Ed Stetzer, Lifeway's president.

"Ten years ago we were talking about who would win the culture war, and now we're talking about how will Christian rights be protected after the culture war. We've lost our home field advantage." This "home field advantage" is the subject of this year's **Lenten Series**.

America's unique national culture was, from the very beginning, forged by the Christian faith. This year's Lenten Series will explore the way in which Christianity

founded, shaped and molded our republic – socially, artistically, legally and politically.

The five part series begins at about 6.45 pm, after Evening Prayer, on Wednesday, February 21st and will conclude on Wednesday, March 21st. Each presentation, each lasting about an hour, will be self-contained so that participants need not feel "lost at sea" if they can miss one or two.

As usual we will be offering just food for thought, but food for the body as well – hearty soup, the best bread in Baltimore and beverages.

Over the past few years, hundreds of instances of religious persecution have been documented in the U.S. And the targets have been exclusively Christians.

Evangelical Christians and Catholics have been labeled religious extremists by the military. Similarly the military has listed Christian organizations including the Family Research Council and American Family Association as domestic hate groups. Students have been ordered to stop praying in front of the Supreme Court and military and civilian chaplains have been told they can no longer pray in Jesus' name.

Please join us to study issues that affects Christians of every persuasion. GPH✘

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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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

Lenten Series continues

Wednesday February 27th 6.45 pm

The Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, March 21st, 7.00 pm

The Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, March 21st 12.00 pm

Details: Call Sara Douglas 410-560-9026

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