

St Stephen's News

St Stephen's Anglican Church · Timonium, Maryland

Volume XXIX, Number 28

A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

July 24th, 2018

FROM THE PARISH CHEFS

Summer 's Silly Suppers

Each Wednesday the chefs of St. Stephen's will be serving the "Silly Summer Suppers." It's hard to think of a less appropriate name than "Silly Summer Suppers" for these remarkable gastronomic events. The food is absolutely scrumptious. The only thing silly about these suppers is the price -- entrée, dessert and salad for just \$10. Soda costs a buck and wine at \$3 per glass and \$5 for two.

FROM FATHER JAMES JOHNSON

The remarkable life of the father of English hymnody

Soon after Charlotte and I married, my mother-in-law revealed to me her secret for staying awake during long and boring sermons. "I leaf through the hymnal," she said, "The composers of so many of the hymns are so much more eloquent than the preachers. Just take Isaac Watts." Our former Associate Rector James Johnson would doubly agree with her. Indeed more than a decade ago he penned his appreciation in the essay published below. GPH✳

Issac Watts was born on July 17, 1674 at Southampton, England. He was the oldest of nine children. A precocious child, Isaac possessed an insatiable thirst for knowledge and manifested remarkable literary abilities.

At the tender age of four he began studying Latin; at five he began studies in Greek, and at the age of ten, Hebrew. When he was only seven years old, he wrote an acrostic based upon his name which revealed his exceptional ability to write poetry as well as his remarkable theological understanding.

I: I am a vile, polluted lump of earth;
S: So I've continued ever since my birth;
A: Although Jehovah grace doth daily give me;
A: As sure this monster, Satan, will deceive me;
C: Come therefore, Lord, from Satan's claws relieve me;
W: Wash me in thy blood, O Christ;
A: And grace divine impart;
T: Then search and try the corners of my heart;
T: That I in all things may be fit to do;
S: Service to thee and thy praise too.

His father was the headmaster of a boarding school in Southampton and was aligned theologically with a dissenting congregational church. Because of his independent views, the elder Watts was persecuted by the established church and twice imprisoned for his nonconformist religious views during the reign of Charles II.

In 1690, when Isaac was 16, he followed the example of his father and openly aligned himself the Dissenters. He received a generous offer to attend a respected English university on the condition that he would become an Anglican priest.

However, he opted instead to sit under the teaching of an independent Congregational pastor, Thomas Rowe, who pastored a small independent church in London and was the principal of a small college committed to training young men for the ministry.

Watts quickly established himself as an exemplary student, excelling in his philosophical and theological studies. He successfully completed his studies in 1694 at 20 years of age, after which he returned home. For the next several years he remained with his parents, dedicating much of his time to theological study and hymn writing.

All of his hymns were characterized by their emphasis on God's glory and majesty and could rightly be described as being

"thoroughly Scriptural, reverent and sublime." But it should be remembered that in those days original hymns were rare and generally looked upon with disfavor by the Church.

Watts was nevertheless extremely dissatisfied with the poor quality of the hymns of his day, which were more often monotonously droned than sung. Because of his dissatisfaction, Watts was determined to do his best to elevate the worship of God to the spiritual heights it rightly deserved.

But because of his reform efforts, he was generally viewed by his contemporaries as too controversial. His hymns were seen as being of mere "human composure" as opposed to the accepted metrical Psalms which were also in common use in the churches of that day.

One Sunday, during Watts' 18th year, he expressed his overall displeasure with the hymns of the day to his father. The elder Watts retorted to his son, "That old hymnal was good enough for your grandfather and your father, so I reckon it will have to be good enough for you! If you do not like our hymns, then let me hear one you have written which is better!"

The younger Watts replied, "Father, I have one which is better." And indeed he did. In fact, he wrote well over six hundred hymns that were better!

Some of the better known titles that came from his gifted and prolific pen were, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross," "Jesus

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: Michael✳, Peter, Charlotte, Bryan, 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, Wade, Sifa, Theresa, Lisa, Larry, Jail & Scott

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

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.

Shall Reign, (based on Psalm 72)" "Joy to the World" (based on Psalm 98), "Our God Our Help in Ages Past" (based on Psalm 90 – interestingly, John Wesley changed Watt's original "Our God" to "O God" when he included the hymn in his hymnal *Psalms and Hymns* which was published in 1738) – and "Am I a Soldier of the Cross?" The latter hymn was written by Watts to complement a sermon he was to preach on I Corinthians 16:13: "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong."

While Watt's hymns encountered much opposition and hostility during his own day, he has come to be universally regarded as "the father of English hymnody" by succeeding generations of Christians.

In 1698, at the age of 24, Watts was called to assist Dr. Isaac Chauncy at the Independent Church in Mark Lane, London. Dr. Chauncy retired from his pastorate in 1702 and Watts was called

to replace him. Many of the hymns Watts penned were written specifically for his congregation and were used to complement his sermons.

Watts was a prolific writer: In 1705, he published his first volume of poems entitled *Lyrical Poems*. This work was warmly received in both England and America.

In 1707, he published his first collection of hymns under the title *Hymns and Songs*. This was the first "true" hymnal in the English language. This volume contained two hundred and ten hymns, including "Alas, and Did My Saviour Bleed (based on Psalm 22:6)."

In 1712, Watts, who suffered from ill health for much of his life, became seriously ill with a fever, which almost took his life. While recovering from this illness, Sir Thomas Abney invited Watts, a life-long bachelor, to visit his home at Theobalds, hoping the change in climate would facilitate his recovery. Intending to stay for only a few weeks, Watts ended up staying the next 36 years!

While living with the Abney family, Watts continued to write and discharge his pastoral duties. In 1719, Watts produced his *Divine and Moral Songs for Children*, which has been described as "the delight of infant minds from that day to the present and probably will be for ages to come." And in the same year, he published, *Psalms of David*, which included "Our God Our Help in Ages Past" and "Joy to the World."

In addition to his poetry and hymns, Watts also produced several volumes of sermons and his *Treatise on Logic*, which was used a textbook at Oxford University.

In 1728, Watts was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from both Edinburgh and Aberdeen Universities.

But the hymn considered by many to be the finest hymn ever written in the English language was first published in 1702 and is entitled, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." This hymn without question is one of the most lofty and sublime hymns ever written.

Watts wrote this marvelous hymn in preparation for an upcoming communion service he was to conduct. The inspiration came as he meditated upon the tremendous truths declared in Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

Watts authored these powerful lines, which acknowledge God's marvelous redemptive work and the heartfelt commitment that this divine work should elicit in those who name the name of Christ.

Isaac Watts, the "father of English hymnody," died on November 25, 1748 at 75 years of age. On his death bed, he proclaimed, "It is the plain promises of the Gospel that are my support; and I bless God that they are plain promises that do not require much labour and pains to understand them; for I can do nothing now but look into my Bible for some promise to support me, and live upon that." Amen to that. JVJ

SOURCES: *Living Stories of Famous Hymns* - Ernest K. Emurian, Baker Book House; *Treasury of Hymn Stories* - Amos R Wells, Baker Book House; *101 & 101 More Hymn Stories* - Kenneth W. Osbeck, Kregal Publications; *Songs of Glory* - William J Reynolds, Zondervan Publishing House

St Stephen's Anglican Church

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www.ststeve.com

The Rev. Canon Guy P Hawtin, *Rector*
The Venerable Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*
Associate Rectors: The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki, The Rev. Wiley Hawks, The Rev. Robert Ludwig and The Rev. Dr. Norman Flowers.
Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUMMER SUNDAY SERVICES

8am: Said Eucharist
9.15am: Sung Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)
11am: Sung Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)
Choral Services (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

Silly Summer Suppers

Every Wednesday 6.30 pm
until Wed. August 29th

The Ladies Who Lunch

Wednesday, August 15th 12.00 pm
To be announced

For reservations: Call Sara Douglas
at 410-560-9026

The Vestry Meeting

Wednesday, August 15th, 7.00 pm

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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