

# Titanic's values are preserved by society

By Terry Mattingly  
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The train from New York City was jammed as Matthew Chancey, a member of the Christian Boys' and Men's Titanic Society, traveled back to the District after this spring's meeting of the Titanic Historical Society.

As he stood, Mr. Chancey noticed in quiet anger that the passengers with seats included young and middle-aged men, while the throng swaying in the aisles included several elderly women.

"I started thinking about the Titanic," he said. "Certain principles are eternal. They deserve to be defended. One such principle is the idea that men are supposed to make sacrifices on behalf of women and children. What I saw on that train was just another sign of what we've lost."

He and the society are doing everything they can to resurrect an earlier interpretation of April 15, 1912. This message is summed up in a sermon delivered only three days after the tragedy, he said.

The sermon, given by the Rev. Henry Van Dyke of Princeton, N.J.,

said that the Titanic left behind more than debts, sorrow and bitter lessons about North Atlantic icebergs, lifeboats and technology. This was a morality play that taught a sobering rule for life.

"It is the rule that 'the strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak,'" he said. "Without it, no doubt, we may have riches and power and dominion. But what a world to live in! Only through the belief that the strong are bound to protect and save the weak because God wills it so, can we hope to keep self-sacrifice, and love, and heroism, and all the things that make us glad to live and not afraid to die."

To promote this message, the Christian Boys' and Men's Titanic Society has reprinted one of the first books about the tragedy, "The Sinking of the Titanic," and is producing a documentary, "Women and Children First: The True Legacy of the R.M.S. Titanic."

The Titanic story is the "closest thing we have to a modern Bible story," said Douglas Phillips, president of the 2-year-old society.

In the District, an 18-foot granite statue shows a robed man rising out of the waves, his arms outstretched like a cross. The engraving reads: "To the brave men who gave their lives that women and children might be saved."

The Titanic memorial once had a prominent position near the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Bridge. Today it's hidden behind Fort McNair, next to waters of the Washington Channel.

"If you ask a cabbie to bring you to the Titanic Memorial, they'll drive around for an hour or more," said Mr. Chancey of a monument often surrounded by litter or used as a urinal.