October 21, 2020

Letter to the Editor

Citizens' Advisory Board

Let us begin by saying that we readily acknowledge, and appreciate, the difficulty of policing. We support those who seek to serve and protect us when policing is properly and effectively done. We understand that it is made more difficult when some choose violence and lawlessness to express their discontent. Such behavior is unacceptable and must have appropriate responses. It is, however, the very difficulty and complexity of protecting the public from violence while protecting the public's right to engage in peaceful assembly and free speech that makes police accountability essential in a free country.

That said, given the current climate of awareness, brought about by the needless police-inflicted death of Mr. George Floyd, we the members of All Saints Episcopal Church, Sunderland, request the Calvert County Sheriff's Office support. We want to ensure that in Calvert County, the citizens who are the source of policing authority are able to assess the appropriateness of police policies and their application, and the performance of those who employ force on our behalf over Calvert County citizens and others.

To that end, we propose forming a Citizens Review Board to share authority, advise and work with police officials in the development of use-of-force policies, training of officers, and reviewing allegations of police misconduct. The Board should be independent, representative of the community, and have the power to ensure all necessary information can be discovered.

In the current climate, we believe that adopting these measures would strengthen the standing of the Sheriff's Office in the community and would go a long way to providing the transparency that will protect and serve everyone, including our deputies in the field. We invite the Sheriff and officials from the County, as well as interested members of the public, to discuss these critical issues and we offer our resources to assist in making that possible.

The People of All Saints Parish