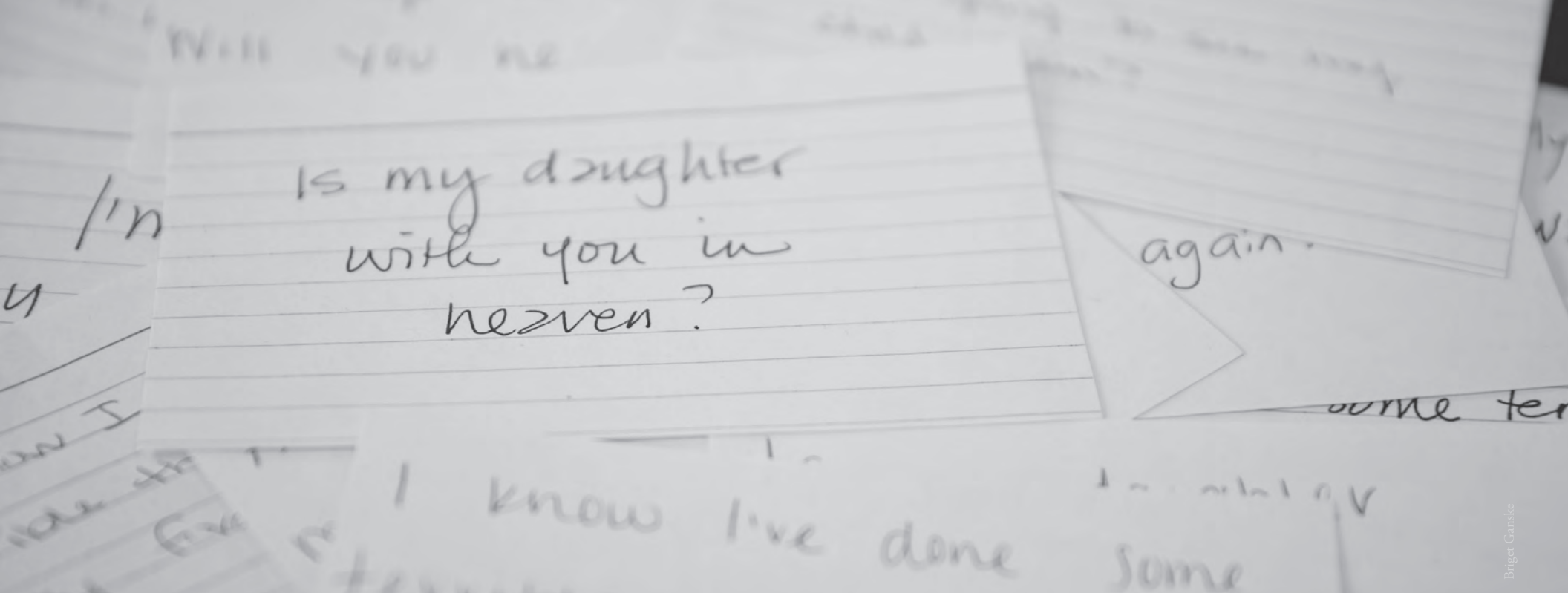


seasons of
the **SPRIT**



If you could ask God one question

The hard-charging and sometimes contentious world in which we live can send our souls into hiding. It’s not safe out there, our souls surmise. It’s not an environment in which the vulnerable will thrive. So, it’s better to lay low. A favorite verse from Psalm 62 says it well:

**For God alone my soul in silence waits,
from him comes my salvation.**



By Gary D. Jones

The presidential race is in full swing, and it struck me after the Iowa caucuses that although the newspapers and airwaves were full of analysis and candidates trading demonizing barbs, the most talked-about news story from the New York Times the day of the caucuses—and the day after—had nothing to do with politics. Instead, it was a story about the dreams of the dying.

The story, “A New Vision for Dreams of the Dying,” noted that scientists and medical professionals, along with hospice workers and clergy, are starting to pay special attention to the fact that dying people very often have dreams and waking visions with remarkable similarity – loved ones who have died visiting them, comforting them and welcoming them, for example.

What struck me about this story, in part, was its timing. Surely a story about the dreams of the dying would take a back seat to the latest attacks of Trump against Cruz, or Bernie against Hillary. But no. It was as if, for a moment anyway, people had become exhausted by it all, and our souls, which had been waiting in silence, responded to this deeper thing. Our lives are so much larger and deeper than we’ve acknowledged. There is more. And our souls are longing to come out of hiding for nourishment from time to time.

It reminded me of my first day at St. Stephen’s Church, over 10 years ago. I had not even moved into my office yet, but the vestry thought it was a good idea to have a large parish meeting so that people could meet the new rector. The crowd was huge.

Part of the reason for the large turnout was that the parish had recently been through some significant controversy, even acrimony. The turmoil was mostly over the consecration of a gay man as bishop. Some people had left the church. Pledges were cut, and tension lingered. I’m sure many were interested in hearing my views, and I’m sure the vestry were all crossing their fingers, hoping that I could simply introduce myself without incident.

But instead of launching into my personal history and talking about myself, I began by asking ushers to pass out blank index cards to everyone. I suggested that my new parishioners might want to close their eyes for a moment. Then I said, “Imagine that God has come to you and said that you can ask God one question, and he’ll give you a clear answer. What would you like to ask God? Write that on your index card.” I told them not to put their names on their cards. (I wasn’t interested in questions from their egos, after all, just real questions from their hearts and souls.) You could have heard a pin drop.

Later, when I read through the cards and compiled them, it was striking that not one person asked a political or churchy question. Nobody wanted to ask God about gay bishops or the charged issues of the day. Instead, they asked true questions about things that really mattered to them, questions like these:

- Is my daughter with you in heaven?
- I know I’ve done some terrible things. Do you really forgive me?
- Am I going to see my child again?
- I’m afraid. My marriage is crumbling. Will you help me?

It was like discovering after the Iowa caucuses that the most emailed and most discussed news story from the New York Times had nothing to do with politics, only love and the hope of staying connected in God.

When the world gets tough and puffed-up egos take center stage, in politics, in business, in the neighborhood, and even in the church, it’s easy to get worked up and anxious. That’s when our souls usually go into hiding. The longings of the soul just don’t seem welcome in a contentious and judgmental environment.

But our souls don’t want to stay in hiding. They wait in silence for the healing and kindness that God has asked us to provide for each other and for the world. Lent is a time to nourish the soul, to turn away from those things that send our vulnerable souls into hiding, and instead, provide for each other a gentler environment in which our souls will feel safe.

And concerning all of those questions above, Easter is the time for us to live into God’s answer...yes. ■

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Michael Sweeney

Activities for middle schoolers from St. Stephen’s offer opportunities to reach across various kinds of barriers—like this trip to Challenge Discovery.

Reaching across the divide

I began my work as St. Stephen’s youth ministry coordinator in early January, just in time for the annual middle school lock-in. It proved to be the best possible way to dive into the beautiful pandemonium of youth ministry.

Late in the night, while I was brushing my teeth and wishing I were asleep, a group of girls who attend the same school confided in me that they felt uncomfortable around a group of girls from a different school. “They don’t like us,” one of the girls said, looking at me in the bathroom mirror.

I listened intently as they told me of their frustrations. I tried to think about the best way to respond. I validated the girls, let them know that I valued their concerns. Then I suggested that there might be another explanation, beyond “they don’t like us,” for the uncomfortable social atmosphere. “The root of the problem,” I said, rinsing my toothbrush, “is probably fear, and fear causes us to act in ways that don’t always make sense to us.” I tried my best to stress the importance of withholding judgment.

As the girls hurried back to their sleeping bags, I felt nervous. Had I given the



By Sarah-Keel Crews

right advice? Had they heard it? Would they take my explanation to heart, or would my words be lost in a sea of One Direction lyrics and teenage angst? Hoping for the best—and some sleep—I walked back to the girls’ sleeping room. Upon crossing the threshold, I picked up on some sort of strange unspoken interaction between the two groups of girls. I could only describe it as the initial step of overcoming a fear: that sense of conviction and confidence that doesn’t last long, but is just enough to give you the first push. It hung silently in the air, and then a daring voice piped up, “Hey, do you guys want to, like, talk?” The silence was broken immediately by the shuffling of sleeping bags on carpet, as the two groups became one. Muffled chatter broke out.

For a moment, I stared in wonder, not believing what I had just witnessed. Then happiness welled up inside me.

We’re constantly told to “do the thing that scares us.” But it’s...well, scary! Fear can dictate our choices, motivate our behavior, and decide our friends. I am inspired by the interaction I witnessed, how the girls allowed the Holy Spirit in, allowed themselves to truly be present in the moment. I want to take a page from their book, to find strength in the Lord, and let him be that daring voice inside me.

The girls stayed up—and kept me up—long after I had told them to go to sleep, but I truly didn’t mind. God was at work and I wasn’t going to get in the way. ■

Ahmadi family settles in



Nooria and Sultan



Valerie Abbott, Deb Lawrence, Nooria with Sana, Sultan, and Gary Jones.

Our new friends, the Ahmadi family from Afghanistan, continue to make great strides in their new home. The entire family was introduced to the parish during a special Sunday Forum in January, where people were able to hear their story and ask questions. Sultan, whose work for the U.S. government placed his life in jeopardy in Afghanistan—the reason for the family’s move to the U.S.—talked about the relief and happiness he and his wife felt once they connected with people from St. Stephen’s. They continue to settle in and are making wonderful progress adjusting to their new life. While they miss the family members they left behind, they are able to Skype with them often.

In recent weeks, Sultan has passed his Virginia Driver’s Test, Nooria has begun learning English, and Sana, their young daughter, has been enjoying Music Makers classes here at St. Stephen’s. (Her infant brother, Yousuf, eats and sleeps!)

Meanwhile, Valerie Abbott, one of the parishioners who has been volunteering to help the Ahmadis navigate their new life here, has been learning to speak Dari (the Afghan Persian language that the Ahmadis speak) from an international student at Hollins University.

Sultan, whose professional background is in human resources, has updated his resumé and is seeking employment.

A group of volunteers coordinated by Kay Remick and Melissa Williams have been working with outreach director Deb Lawrence to assist the Ahmadis as they adjust to their life here. If you would like to help, please be in touch with any of them to learn more about what is needed. ■

Mary Sulerud to retire as associate rector in March

The Rev. Mary C. Sulerud, who joined the staff of St. Stephen's as an associate rector in May 2014, has announced her plans to retire in mid-March.

Mary came to St. Stephen's after serving as interim rector of St. Thomas Church in Richmond. She has extensive experience in parish ministry and was interim precentor at Washington National Cathedral. She is also an experienced consultant in transition ministry, and was transition officer for the Diocese of Maryland.

Mary is a Richmond native, having lived here (and attended St. Bridget's Roman Catholic Church next door) until age 10. She holds a B.S. from Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota and received her master of divinity cum laude from Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria. Before ordination, she was an arts administrator and holds an arts administration certificate from Harvard.

Mary's husband Peder, a visual artist and retired architect, have an adult daughter, Emily, a social worker. Emily recently completed her education and has settled in Richmond.

Mary has had special responsibilities for families with young children, and has served regularly in the 9 a.m. Palmer Hall service in addition to preaching and celebrating at our other services. She coordinated Vacation Bible School and the parish weekend at Shrine Mont, among other important parish offerings. She's been a frequent contributor to this publication. She was involved in envisioning and planning the new team approach to family ministry here. One of her first tasks after arriving was to lead the national search for a new director of music, culminating in the appointment of Peter Hopkins. Clearly, Mary has been a versatile and important member of the clergy staff.

"St. Stephen's has given me the opportunity to work in a huge system and to know and appreciate Gary Jones," says Mary. "When you are the rector of a large church it is tempting to either let it run in a rather laissez-faire way or move from one big idea to another."



Emily, Mary, and Peder

other. What I value so much in Gary is a persistence of vision about how much individual relationships matter with one another and with God."

"When we were interviewing priests from around the United States and Mary's name surfaced," recalls Gary, "I called my friend, Sam Lloyd, the former dean of Washington National Cathedral, who had worked with Mary in that great place. Sam said that Mary Sulerud was one of the brightest, most hardworking and loyal priests he had known. Mary has certainly proven herself in all of these ways, and it is a privilege for me to count her as a trusted colleague and friend."

"Now that Mary has decided to retire from active parish ministry in order to spend more time with her beloved husband and talented, grown daughter, we can all celebrate Mary's many years of building up the Episcopal Church and give thanks that one as gifted as she has contributed so substantially to our parish life at St. Stephen's."

After retiring from full-time parish ministry, Mary will turn her attention to a program that she helped develop for new rectors in the Diocese of Virginia. She also looks forward to spending more time with family and friends, particularly Peder, a visual artist who has been an active volunteer at St. Stephen's.

While Mary looks forward to retirement and the opportunities it promises, "The hardest part of retiring is, of course, that it changes relationships and I have been blessed with extraordinary clergy colleagues in Penny, Gene, Weston, and Bill, and with the opportunity to work alongside a talented and devoted staff who always seem to make the impossible possible. I will so miss God's people who have been so supportive, appreciative and such good friends."

Please join us in the Large Fellowship Hall for a reception on **March 13 following the 11:15 service** to thank Mary for her wonderful ministry here, and to wish her well in retirement. ■

Needlepoint Guild forms at St. Stephen's

Have you seen the beautiful new cathedral chairs in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit and in the chancel? A newly-formed needlepoint guild is beginning to work on stitching the kneelers for the 56 chairs in the chapel. The canvasses are being designed and painted by Nancy Lukoskie of Easton, Maryland. Nancy has done work for the Washington National Cathedral and Bruton Parish Church, among others.

There are two ways to support this effort. You may give a kneeler in memory of, or in honor of, an individual or group by making a donation of \$350.

You may also join the Needlepoint Guild and stitch a kneeler. You'll be asked to submit a test piece (test kits are available in the parish office) in advance. We will also offer a class for novice needlepointers.

If you have questions, please contact Mary Anne Burke at maburke5411@gmail.com or 804.285.1078. ■



The needlepoint guild will stitch kneelers for the new cathedral chairs in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit.

Anna Julia Cooper School admitted to Virginia Association of Independent Schools

Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School, a middle school founded by St. Stephen's and others to serve students in Richmond's East End, has been around only since 2009, but it has already reached a remarkable benchmark: accreditation by the Virginia Association of Independent Schools.



By Sarah Bartenstein

Parishioner and former senior warden Gussie Bannard is a dedicated volunteer at Anna Julia Cooper and a member of its strategic planning committee. Gussie is very familiar with the accreditation process, having served as head of St. Catherine's School.

"It's amazing for a school like this to get accredited as soon as they did," she said. She explained that in the accreditation process, everything the school offers is measured against its stated mission, from academics to chapel services to extracurricular activities to safety procedures.

It is a rigorous and involved process. The preparation includes plenty of self-examination and documentation by staff, faculty and board members, and eventually, a site visit by a team from VAIS. The team includes people with expertise in various areas of a school's life—finance, programs, fund development, etc. The team scrutinizes everything "to determine whether you are the quality institution you say you are, and whether you do what you say you do," Gussie says.

Team members talk to faculty, staff, students, and parents. They attend classes.

Before the team leaves the campus after the two-day visit, they provide a list of action items – including any that require immediate attention – and commendations for things done well. A more detailed report follows the visit.

VAIS accreditation recognizes that an institution has reached a certain level of maturity and excellence in its own mission, Gussie says, and that might be different from that of other VAIS schools, each of which pursues excellence in its own unique mission. Such schools then get to enjoy a closer and more collegial relationship with other independent schools. The Commonwealth of Virginia recognizes these institutions, as well, and holds them to certain standards. For example, Gussie notes, accredited schools must have excellent disaster response plans in place and meet other safety standards.



VAIS accreditation is not only recognized by the Commonwealth of Virginia, but also on an international level through the National Association of Independent



(Top) The student body; (below, left) volunteers are crucial to the school's success.

Schools Commission on Accreditation. Parishioner Betsy Hunroe, Executive Director of VAIS, serves on the commission and was very involved in the process of helping AJCES move from its early stages of candidacy to its fully-accredited status.

Betsy remarked, "We couldn't be more proud to welcome AJCES into our association of member schools, numbering 92 across the commonwealth. We have much to learn from the school's dedication to serving its student population through its unique mission, and of course the school will benefit from close connections with other member schools' administrators, faculty, and programs."

School head Mike Maruca said, "This is great news, a wonderful milestone in the life of the school, and something for all of us to be proud of."

In an email to the staff and board members, he thanked them for their "faith and generosity these past seven years without which AJC would not be possible."

St. Stephen's relationship with Anna Julia Cooper is important for the school and for the church. Many of our parishioners, like Gussie, are deeply involved as volunteers, including mentors who have maintained relationships with their mentees even after they've left AJCES for high school. Two current board members are St. Stephen's parishioners, Elizabeth Wallace and Wesley Wright. Other area churches and organizations have also been crucial to the success of AJCES.

Mike noted that whenever he speaks at St. Stephen's, he reminds the audience that "there would be no Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School without them. We were 'born' in the vestry room during the winter of 2008-2009."

The devotion of so many people to this vision and mission has resulted in the placement of AJCES graduates in a number of independent schools in the area, as well as excellent public high schools and specialty centers. At this point in the school year, several high school seniors who were graduates of AJCES have already received acceptance into four-year colleges, an excellent sign of the academic success these students continue to achieve. ■

The Mission of Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School

Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School is an independent, faith-based middle school, providing full tuition scholarships to students of limited economic resources primarily from Richmond's East End. Through a program focused on the whole child, we help empower students and graduates to change the trajectory of their lives, setting their sights on success in high school, college, and serving their communities. We value all staff, parents and volunteers as integral to our success as a school and a 'community of affection.'

The work continues in New Orleans

From January 30 to February 6, a team consisting of Howard Anderson, John Emory, Lea Emory, Tamara Orr, Earl Roney, David Satterfield, and Janie Satterfield worked with the St. Bernard Project in New Orleans, part of an ongoing effort for most of the decade since Hurricane Katrina. The house where the group worked was located in the Gentilly part of New Orleans. This area near Lake Pontchartrain was flooded when several of the outtake canals broke during Hurricane Katrina. Our team painted the entire inside of the six-room, two-bath house, and installed all the interior doors and their frames. Other work included painting all interior doors, drywall fixes and mudding, putting up trim around the doors, priming the trim, and painting the exterior wrap-around porch.

The St. Bernard Project was founded in 2006 in St. Bernard Parish to shorten the time between disaster and full recovery by ensuring that people and communities recover in a prompt, efficient and predictable manner. The organization has also assisted those in other areas of the country following natural disasters. ■



Our volunteers installed doors and trim, built out closets, and painted every room.

Janie Satterfield

Monastic wisdom for everyday living

‘Growing a Rule of Life’ offered by Society of St. John the Evangelist

Are you out of alignment with your inner self and with nature? Should you be growing a rule of life?

For this Lent the SSJE Brothers have teamed up with the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Theological Seminary to produce a six-week series of readings, questions, and videos to help individuals, parishes and groups come together to live more intentionally.

People often experience being out of alignment with their inner selves and with nature. In the western world in 2016, it is almost too simple to be ‘plugged in’ and working around the clock. The Sabbath is no longer officially kept, as families find themselves inundated with social obligations. Living a balanced life requires growing and internalizing a whole set of new boundaries and rules, which may seem impossible in the face of your already overcrowded schedule. But just as stakes and lattices nurture the growth of young plants, so too can spiritual disciplines support the flourishing of our whole being.

You can download a free workbook or purchase a beautiful printed copy for \$3 in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen’s.

- When you focus on growing a rule of life, you will learn to:
- Design a balanced plan for growing into a deeper relationship with God, Self, Others, and Creation.
 - Celebrate areas of your life that are thriving and explore areas that need extra nourishment.
 - Tune your sensitivity to the rhythms of nature to help you keep a Rule of Life.
 - If you do this as part of a group, you will grow in fellowship with others and support them through the growing process.

Visit www.ssje.org/growrule to learn more about the series. It is available for individuals and as group course.

We commend this workbook and video series to help us all integrate holy habits into our daily rhythm of life and care for creation. ■

Holy Week services



Briget Ganske

Stations of the Cross

All services take place in the main church unless otherwise indicated.

Monday through Friday
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m. in Palmer Hall
Evensong, 5:30 p.m. in Palmer Hall

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday, March 20
7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note the time)
9:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two
All gather at the Three Chopt entrance to the church for the Liturgy of the Palms before processing to separate services in Palmer Hall and in the church
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, *followed by reception*
5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion
6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper in Large Fellowship Hall
8:00 p.m., Compline

Maundy Thursday, March 24
7:30 p.m., Holy Eucharist and Stripping of the Altar followed by all-night vigil

Good Friday, March 25
8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer and Communion from the reserved sacrament, 8:10 a.m.
Noon, Liturgy for Good Friday
5:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross

‘Could you not stay awake with me one hour?’
Maundy Thursday Vigil
On Maundy Thursday (March 24 this year), we remember Jesus’ commandment to his disciples, “Love one another.” It is the day we remember the institution of the Lord’s Supper before his betrayal, passion and death. At 7:30 p.m. on Maundy Thursday, there will be a service of Holy Eucharist, followed by the Stripping of the Altar and Procession to the Altar of Repose. This service is one of the most deeply moving liturgies of the entire year. An all-night vigil follows in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, and you are invited to take part for an hour, anytime between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.

Easter at St. Stephen’s

This time last year, we were making plans to hold Easter services in the gymnasium at St. Catherine’s School across the street from the church, since our church was in the early stages of its renovation, and the Large Fellowship Hall could not accommodate Easter-size crowds.

That was an exciting day, but this year will be even better, as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord in our newly-refurbished church.

The schedule of services will be:

Holy Saturday, March 26
7:30 p.m., Holy Baptism and the Great Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter

Easter Day, Sunday, March 27
7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note earlier-than-usual time)
9:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, *followed by reception (two services, one in the church, one in Palmer Hall)*
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, *followed by reception*
5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion
6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper in Large Fellowship Hall
8:00 p.m., Compline

Child care will be available during the 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. services.

Lenten traditions

During Lent we traditionally take on spiritual disciplines that help us draw closer to God. The brothers of the Society of St. John the Evangelist offer the following suggestions for practices that can be helpful in your journey through Lent.

Fasting
This Lent let go of the inessential to hold fast to what is essential: If you abstain from food, ask what you hunger for. Or fast from speed to embrace slowness; fast from indifference to awaken to wonder.

Discipline
You might choose not to let something go, but to take something on: Devote yourself to a discipline—exercise or prayer, reading Scripture or planting a garden—that will help you reconnect with God, creator and sustainer of all that is life-giving within you.

Prayer
Each Lent we pray, “Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, O Lord.” Ask for a new heart to know and love God. Pray each day that God will break your heart open—to forgiveness, to peace, to the needs of the world God loves so well.

Service
This Lent take the risk of asking God to work out his purpose for your life, offering yourself anew to be used in God’s service. Ask God to be God and pray, “Here am I, Lord, send me!”

Intention
Whatever practice you choose, be intentional. Be truly present to the grace of this season, which allows us to rediscover what is essential to the abundant life for which God has created us.

Wellness classes and Lent

During this season of introspection and spiritual discipline, one of our wellness classes—yoga, chi kung, meditation, mindfulness—might be especially helpful. The traditional practice of “giving something up” can be useful, but learning to be still and spiritually present can be, as well—and might even be combined with a traditional Lenten fast.

Visit the Wellness page of our Web site to see what classes are being offered, www.saintstephensrichmond.net/wellness.

Some are “drop-in,” and do not require registration. Others ask for a commitment of time—a single session per week for four or five weeks. We have several excellent instructors: Lynn Brooke, Millie Cain, JoAnn Bibb Deforge, and Ryan Duffy.



Praise God, from whom

On January 26, 2015 what was a capital campaign transitioned into our capital project with the onset of construction. During the 11 months that followed, we worshiped in alternative spaces, including the Large Fellowship Hall, Palmer Hall, and even our neighbors' spaces—St. Catherine's School and St. Bridget Catholic Church. We have grown in many ways.

Construction progressed ahead of schedule and well within budget. Although we survived nearly a year outside the church, we were able to worship in our beautiful new space in time for the Christmas pageants (4), the Fourth Sunday of Advent, and all of our Christmas services (1). Since that time, additional work has continued, including the restoration of the reredos, the arrival of cathedral chairs for the Chapel of the Holy Spirit and the chancel, the mobile altar (5) and plantings around the improved, accessible entrances (6); work on the new font, the reinstallation of the organ, the expansion of the Memorial Garden, and repair to the east window will continue a bit longer.

Because of the vision, generosity and hard work of so many parishioners, we have fulfilled, or are close to fulfilling, our goals of improved HVAC and accessibility, worship space enhancements—including cleaning, restoration and repair of the lectern, pulpit (2), pews (3) and stained glass windows (7)—expansion of the Memorial Garden, and increased support for our mission and outreach partners. Many thanks to all who were involved: donors, campaign leaders, clergy and staff, vestry members, construction workers, and those who kept this effort in their prayers. In addition to the campaign leaders listed, we are deeply grateful to Gussie Bannard, who served as senior warden during much of the campaign, and Allen Goolsby, who served as junior warden during the same period. Thanks also to JB Burtch, current senior warden, and Laurie Rogers, junior warden, and to Robert Allen, campaign treasurer. Katie Chernau and Lynn Ivey worked tirelessly as our liaisons with the contractor, and the city.

We also remember with deep gratitude and love the vision of the late Lowndes Burke, one of the original campaign co-chairs, whose example and love for St. Stephen's inspired all to continue the work he began.

Thanks be to God!



all blessings flow

Photos by Briget Ganske



Campaign Leadership

Carol Dickinson
Andrew Luke
Duncan Owen
Campaign Co-Chairs

The Rev. Gary D. Jones
Rector

Patsy and John Barr
Kay and Richard Clary
Taylor and Bruce Raquet
Karen and David Wise



Eight hundred and seventy-seven families or individuals have made a pledge so far for 2016

Help us get to 1,000

At St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, we try to remain focused on the primary mission of the church, to love and serve God by loving and serving all people. It is important to us that the first impression one has when he or she sets foot on the church grounds, or joins in one of our ministries, or logs onto our Web site, or reads one of our publications, is that he or she is loved, belongs, and is at home. We hope that all we say and do is oriented to caring for people and building up their spiritual lives, in a busy, digital, and over-stressed world that is not always supportive of living the true and abundant life we see in Jesus. We also know that many people come to church in distress, having lost a loved one or seeking guidance in a difficult family situation.

For this reason, except for our annual giving campaign drive in the fall, one does not hear constant reports on church finances or appeals for financial support. We want to keep the main thing, the main thing.

But the invitation is always open to all who value this community of faith to make a financial pledge to support it. While the annual campaign takes place in the fall, new people are joining all the time, and some who are long-time members oc-

Even if you are only able to make what you think is a very small annual gift, we hope you'll consider doing so. It's just like God to take the small things, like a few loaves and fishes, and do some pretty spectacular things with it.

casionaly overlook the annual call for pledges and are happy to be reminded just how much the church depends on all of us pitching in, as we are able. We still have a little way to go to meet our financial goal for 2016 – just under \$100,000. But our main goal is simply to increase the number of families or individuals who pledge. At present, about 58 percent of those who are official members of the church make an annual pledge.

Even if you are only able to make what you think is a very small annual gift, we hope you'll consider doing so. It's just like God to take the small things, like a few loaves and fishes, and do some pretty spectacular things with it. It's in that spirit that we invite you to make a financial pledge or special gift to St. Stephen's Church. Amazing things are going on around here, and we suspect God has even greater things in mind. Your gift, large or small, truly matters. Thank you. ■

A way to protect the children we love

Dr. Lisa Miller to speak at St. Stephen's about results of 15 years of scientific research on the spiritual lives of children and youth



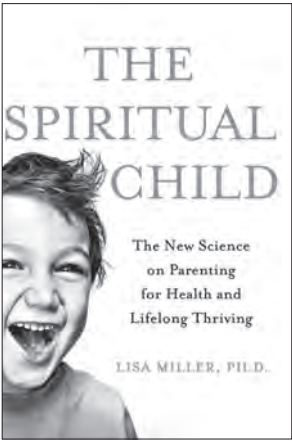
What if you could do something that would protect your children and teenagers against threats to their well-being— dangers such as clinical depression, drug use, and risky sexual behaviors? You'd do it, wouldn't you?

Clinical psychologist Lisa Miller, Ph.D., who teaches at Columbia University, has conducted pioneering

research into spiritual development in children, adolescents, and families. Her scientific, peer-reviewed research (in which other researchers have also participated) has yielded truly startling findings about the level of protection offered to young people when they have a relationship with the divine, and that protection increases when a positive association with spirituality is shared with at least one parent (80 percent protected against major depression in adolescence and early adulthood).

It increases even further when passed down three generations, from grandparent to parent to child (90 percent protected). These findings, along with examples from Dr. Miller's clinical practice, are published in her bestselling book *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving*.

Dr. Miller will be at St. Stephen's soon! Don't miss the opportunity to hear about this research, ask questions, and have her sign your copy of her book (available in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's), **Thursday, March 3, at 7 p.m.** Child care will be available. Register at www.saintstephensrichmond.net/speakers, or use one of the forms at Information Central. ■



Film on mind-body connection to be shown at St. Stephen's

'The Connection' to be followed by panel discussion, April 21

At age 24, filmmaker Shannon Harvey was diagnosed with an autoimmune disease. Her immune system had become hyperactive and was attacking normal, healthy tissues. Her muscles and joints were inflamed and she was told if her disease progressed she could experience organ failure or become wheelchair-bound. In search of a cure, Shannon tried a range of medical approaches and alternative therapies. But she was still sick. She noticed that when she was stressed, her condition worsened.

With a background in journalism, Shannon sought answers in pioneering science. On her journey to getting better, Shannon realized that in order to change her health she needed to change her mind.

One result of her experience is "The Connection," a film about how research is proving a direct connection between our mind and our physical health.

The film features scientists, researchers, writers and doctors (including Andrew Weil, Dean Ornish, Esther Sternberg, Jon Kabat-Zinn), as well as remarkable true stories of people adding mind-body medicine to their healing toolkit to recover from severe back pain, heart disease, infertility, cancer and multiple sclerosis. While the science is complex, the solutions for people suffering with illness are astonishingly simple. The film asserts that we can counter the harmful effects of stress with an equally powerful relaxation response triggered through specific techniques such as meditation. It discusses the ways that emotions can affect the course of an illness for better or for worse. The film explains the mechanisms behind belief, which many scientists say contributes 30 to 50 percent of the effect of a biological cure, and we are learning how the mind might influence the expression of genes and the rate at which we age.

This film will be shown at St. Stephen's on **April 21 at 7 p.m.** and will be followed by a panel discussion. Although there is no admission charge, your registration will help us gauge the number of people to expect. This event is open to the entire community. To register—and to learn more about the range of St. Stephen's wellness ministries—visit www.saintstephensrichmond.net/wellness. ■

Chris & Valerie Abbott, Cabell & Lucy Ackerly, Dave & Marion Addison, John & Mary Frances Aiken, Jim & Marti Alexander, Litt & Carol Allen, Janet Allen, Lang & Lisa Ambrose, Jason & Kathryn Angus, David & Becky Anthony, Billy & Janie Armfield, Bill & Ellen Armstrong, Carol Armstrong, Jackie Atiyeh, Charley & Sally Ayers, Bob Aylor, Jim & Mary Beth Baber, John & Violet Bain, David & Gussie Bannard, Gene Barham, Robert & Mary Elizabeth Barnes, Larry & Sarah Bartenstein, George & Laura Baskerville, John & Bev Bates, Lee & Kate Batten, Alan & Lisa Bedell, Marjorie Benedict, Cheryl Blackwell, Chris & Kimberly Blair, Jack & Sue Blair, Doug & Lisa Blouch, Roger & Anne Boeve, Chris & Caroline Boggs, Genie Borum, Skip Bottom, Gene & Cynthia Bowles, Scott & Becky Boyers, Margaret Bradley, Read & Jody Branch, Caroline Brandt, David & Nancy Breeding, Don Brennan & Brooke Davila, Cordell & Ginny Briggs, Allen & Sydney Broaddus, Joe & Leslie Brockman, Bill & Suzanne Brown, Rodney & Madeline Brown, Glennie Brown, Brian & Beth Brubaker, John & Joan Bruns, Mary Brydon, Michaux & Judy Buchanan, Blissie Buford, Paul & Betsy Bullock, John Burgess, Archer Burke, Marshall Burke, James Burke, Barbara Burrows, Bob Burrus, Nate & Marni Bushnell, Jeremy & Xan Byrum, Ed & Lauren Caldas, J.B. & Lois Campbell, Courtenay Cann, Marygrace Cantilo, Tom & Sandy Capps, Linda Carpenter, Trace Carson, Hugh & Marie Carter, Ashley Carter, Evan Chesterman, Nathan & Dawn Childs, Polly Christian, Dixon & Kate Roy Christian, Cole & Macon Clarkson, Steve & Joan Clement, Clark Cockrell, Ron & Stephanie Coleman, Bobby & Barbara Cone, Jinx Constine, Elliott & Gale Cooper, Jim & Margie Couch, Tom & Sterling Coulbourn, Ned & Sharon Cox, Walter Craigie, Glen & Karen Crawford, Hatcher & Leslie Crenshaw, Rick & Shirley Crim, Todd Culbertson, Martha Curry, Steven & Barbara Dalle Mura, Christa Daniel, Claude & Mary Meade Davenport, Ken & Ann Davis, John & Cami Davis, Michael & Dianne Del Bueno, Jere & Paula Dennison, Brian Dent, Sam Derieux, Bob & Clarice Dibble, Paul & Judy Dickinson, Robert Dilday, Jennifer Dockum, Dutch & Penny Dorschel, Carter Doswell, Betsy Downey, James & Catherine Driscoll, Dan & Paula Dukes, John & Debbie Dunlap, B.J. 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Giving it up (sort of)

As a child I was very sad when Lent fell early in February. As a Valentine’s Day baby I reveled in the wonderful chocolate excess, even when I was small. Inevitably I would wrestle with what to give up in Lent and the “go-to” item was always chocolate because I still love it above all other desserts, and frankly above most of life’s other food offerings, too. Then the post-Ash Wednesday birthday would come and my Lenten discipline would fall apart, sometimes slowly (one M&M won’t hurt) or immediately (how could I possibly not eat some of that heart-shaped cake that Mom just made?).



By Mary Sulerud

This year I am walking the journey of Lent in several new ways and one that I treasure is working with the children and their parents who are participating in communion preparation classes. One reason I treasure this class is that each week we delve into another parable that asks what is keeping us from a full life with Jesus. We begin Lent with the parable of the vine and branches from the Gospel of John. This parable affirms the profound connection that we have with Jesus, our very life blood, and as we continue to explore this parable we begin to ask questions about what keeps the “sap” of the life of Jesus flowing in us and what blocks this essential life in us.

Each week the parables plunge into the deepest questions that the Lenten season

asks us to explore: how Jesus always seeks us and finds us, but as adults we persist in being lost. No matter what we do God forgives us, but why do we both want to be—and resist being—forgiven? How long do we want to carry the burdens of our brokenness that God has ceased to remember? As we hear the stories of Jesus healing people, can we open our own lives to such tender love and healing?

While I never quite made the connection until I was an adult, “giving it up,” whatever “it” was, had to do with a very deep desire to make more space for God in my life. Walking with the children and their parents reveals the importance of prayer and reflection on the Word of God, and that may lead to “giving it up” in ways that I do not anticipate or expect. In a sea of things to do, what always shifts to the bottom of the “to-do” list and what might that be about? Time is precious and of all the things including money I find easy to give away, why do I hoard time? What am I over-doing and how might that be blocking a far more loving call to be with Christ and with others? What am I making idols of in my life, in my relationships, even in relating to God that it is time to stop? I suspect that you have your own questions as well.

It’s an early Lent and while sometimes giving up chocolate may have been the answer, the “meh” factor is pretty high about chocolate right now. Being in this very special community has shown me all sorts of things far worthier to “give up” because together we have embraced what we really want, to be loved by and to be in love with Jesus. It is a life of abundant forgiveness, healing and “sap” from the True and Living Vine that keeps pouring in and through us in spite of our best efforts sometimes to block it. ■

Sixth icon workshop to be offered in July

Last year’s class filled up by April; don’t delay!

We are pleased to offer St. Stephen’s popular summer icon writing workshop for the sixth year in a row, **July 25-29, 2016**.

Students use techniques developed at the end of the Iconoclast period (before the year 1000 A.D.), in which, through a gradual, step-by-step process, each will see a face gradually emerge from the darkness, a face glowing with an internal light. Artistic experience and painting skills are not prerequisites. The willingness to let go and trust are much more important for this prayerful activity. In fact, painters are said to be “writing,” rather than “painting” the icon.

Icons will be made using the traditional materials of egg tempera and gold leaf on gessoed panels. Beginners may write the icon of the Holy Face, while returning students will have other choices.

Each day begins at 8:10 with Morning Prayer and Eucharist in Palmer Hall Chapel, followed by an anointing of hands in the studio. Each day ends around 5:00 p.m.

Iconographer Suzanne Schleck will return to teach this class for the sixth time. The retired public school art teacher has studied for more than 20 years with the Rev. John Walsted, master iconographer and expert on 14th to 16th century Russian icons, and has taken additional workshops with Robert Lentz and the Prosopon School of Iconography.

Participants in the previously-offered icon workshops—lay people and clergy who have come from the parish and beyond—have found it a deeply enriching experience and many are repeat students. Last year’s workshop filled up by mid-April, so if you are



thinking of taking part, do not delay your registration.

Workshop tuition (including all supplies) is \$375. A deposit of \$100 is required to hold your place, and should be paid by **July 1**. Some scholarship assistance is available; please contact Gene LeCouteur in the parish office about assistance.

To register, visit www.saintstephensrichmond.net/icon, or stop by the parish office.

Icon guild

A group of women and men who have taken part in the icon workshop at St. Stephen’s enjoy this practice so much that they continue it year-round. An icon guild gathers on Friday mornings in one of the Sunday school rooms at St. Stephen’s to write icons together. All are welcome. To learn more about this group, please contact Donny Dunn, dddunnniii@verizon.net.



A shot from Gene's recent trip to Israel.

Preparing for spiritual travel

By Gene LeCouteur

Travel can be an ordinary part of our daily lives—as commonplace as our daily commute to and from work. Other times we travel for work where the destination is determined by considerations other than our desire to visit a location or whether it is the “right” time of year to visit (think Boston in January or Florida in July). There are other times when our travel is to pay a visit to family or friends or for special events (Thanksgiving or a wedding). Then there is travel for fun and relaxation (think Florida in January or Boston in July).

There is another kind of travel, a special kind: spiritual travel. This might be a pilgrimage to a holy place, walking El Camino de Santiago, a mission trip, or visiting a monastery for a retreat, among others. Recently I traveled with a group to Israel and as I write I am preparing to go with a mission team to Azua in the Dominican Republic.

When I left for Israel in January, it had been several years since I'd made such a trip and it gave me the occasion to rethink what makes spiritual travel different from other kinds of travel, especially a vacation. I say vacations because when traveling to a different country or city we can find ourselves turning to the familiar mode of vacation travel. You know the routine. Make sure your passport is up-to-date, get comfortable shoes and clothing, make sure you have all your meds and emergency numbers, charge up the camera, get outlet adapters, read up on where you are headed, etc. These are all part and parcel of getting ready for almost any trip, yet they can prevent us from getting the most from a more spiritual journey.

For example, taking photos has become super easy and even profligate. We don't even need a special camera to take pictures. We just flick on the phone and shoot away. We can take hundreds of photos (no film!) to sort through later. Yet the entire time we are taking photos we are present only to the screen—we may just miss the place and the sense of being there. How many times have you taken photos, and later wondered what was so interesting about that subject or place? It happens to me too often.

Besides the usual to-do/to-pack list, there is another dimension to the spiritual traveler's preparation: getting the soul ready for what may be encountered. Do read up on where you are going. Have a sense of what you will see when you get there. If there is something of importance jot down a note to remind you about the special place.

Do have a camera, but make a pact with yourself to take a few photos and only after you have allowed yourself to be steeped in the location. It is better to have experienced the place and have to resort to postcards or photos that others have taken, than to have a great collection of snapshots and only a hazy recollection of why you went there in the first place.

Be ready and open to being surprised. On my trip to Israel we were scheduled to make a quick stop at a relatively new archaeological site in the town of Migdal (ancient Magdala). I had read an article from the Smithsonian and looked at their beautiful photos, but I had no idea of the impact the place would have on me. When our guide, Fr. Eamon Kelly (an Irish priest right out of the movies) began describing the site and what we were seeing in the remains of this first-century synagogue, my preconceptions shattered. Here was a real synagogue like the ones Jesus taught in on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. I could see how small it was and where they stood to read the Torah scroll. I felt as if I could see and hear Jesus and the impact he had on those communities. Our quick stop turned into a full morning, and we could have stayed longer. A rather prosaic visit turned into a revelation that I am still processing.

Give yourself time to process. Whether encountering biblical sites or working as a missionary, your experiences have the potential to be spiritually deepening and enriching. But if you head for the bar at the end of the day, or flip on the TV, or spend time catching up on Facebook, you will not allow that enrichment to happen. Instead, sit with your fellow travelers and share your experiences. Read scripture. Pray. Allow for something new and wonderful to make itself known.

Spiritual travel requires a different mindset and different goals than other kinds of travel. So prepare for these trips both practically and spiritually. The spiritual tourist comes home wondering what all the fuss was about. The prepared spiritual traveler comes home with new eyes and ears and new ways of perceiving the everyday. The spiritual traveler is transformed and enriched and perhaps even reborn in faith. ■

Your Lenten resource: the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's

Lent is upon us and one of the practices that many people take up for Lent is spiritual reading. This might mean reading scripture according to the Daily Lectionary (we are in Year 2). Others select a book of daily readings by a particular author such as Henri Nouwen, Richard Rohr or Kate Morehead. Still others might find a collection of readings by various authors a helpful way to work through Lent. Whatever your preference, the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's has a variety of hand-selected



By Gene LeCouteur

options we think you will find helpful, intriguing and inspiring. Here are a few new recommendations as well as some perennial favorites. Come by the shop to browse these and other selections. Feel free to ask me or any of the clergy for recommendations. May you have a holy and blessed Lent.

New to the Bookshop

All Shall Be Well is a new anthology from Orbis Books, the publisher of Bread and Wine, a perennial favorite. This collection of inspiring stories, poems, short essays, letters, etc. includes contemporary authors such as Pope Francis, James Martin, Mary Oliver, Joan Chittister, and classics from Henri Nouwen, Phyllis Tickle, John Updike, T.S. Eliot and more. There are 54 readings in all—one for every day from Ash Wednesday through Easter Day and beyond. These writings will surprise you, touch you, or comfort you as you make your journey through Lent.

Lent and Easter Wisdom from ... is a series of books from Ligouri Publications. Each little book focuses on the writings of an author or saint. The readings are quite short, a paragraph or two, followed by a passage from scripture and then a suggested Lenten action. The featured authors include Henri Nouwen, Thomas Merton, St. Francis and St. Clare, and St. Therese of Lisieux. Don't know which to choose? Come in, read a page out of each, and see which one strikes you as compelling.

Classics

Bread and Wine, mentioned above, includes 72 selections—46 are for Lent and 26 focus on resurrection and new life that are meant for Eastertide and beyond. The writers include contemporaries such as Kathleen Norris, Barbara Brown Taylor, and Wendell Berry, and time-honored writings from Thomas Merton, St. Augustine, Christina Rossetti, C.S. Lewis, and John Donne, to name just a few.

A Season for the Spirit by Martin Smith is my personal go-to book for Lent. This collection of short essays helps me to “dig deep” spiritually as I progress on my 40-day journey. Martin's writings do not grow old or dated. He is one of the great teachers of the Anglican tradition and a recent visitor to St. Stephen's for our Advent retreat.

Wondrous Encounters is by Richard Rohr, one of the great spiritual writers of our time. This Franciscan begins each meditation with a single title or phrase that sums up the point. Then he offers the meditation followed by key passages from the readings. He ends each meditation with a Starter Prayer that invites you to self-disclosure and to enter the wondrous divine dialogue with clarity, insight, and holy desire. His meditations are intended to help us in our transformation into our authentic self, the original “image and likeness,” which is the very image of God. ■



St. Stephen’s Staff

To reach a member of the staff, call 288.2867. Extensions are listed in parentheses. Email may be addressed to a staff member by using the first initial and last name @saintstephensrichmond.net (e.g., John Doe would be jdoe@saintstephensrichmond.net).

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Other numbers

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Sarah Bartenstein, *editor*
Steven Longstaff, *designer*

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Confirmation at St. Stephen’s
Bishop’s visit takes place on the Day of Pentecost, May 15

Each year, St. Stephen’s welcomes one of our bishops as a representative of the larger church to which we all belong. While he or she is here, the bishop preaches, celebrates the Eucharist, and confirms young people and adults making a mature, public commitment to the faith.

Youth are prepared for confirmation by Michael Sweeney and several adult mentors through a process culminating in their 9th grade year. Adults are prepared by Weston Mathews and other clergy in the Inquirers Class. (This class is offered three times per year. There is one remaining offering before confirmation: Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., beginning March 30.)

This year’s visit will take place on **Sunday, May 15**, the Day of Pentecost, at the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services in the main church. Our visiting bishop will be the Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick, assistant bishop. Please support our young people and adults with your prayers and presence. ■



The Rt. Rev. Shannon Johnston, our diocesan bishop, visited last spring and confirmed youth and adults. This year’s visit will be with the Rt. Rev. Edwin F. Gulick, assistant bishop.

Briget Ganske

New vestry members and officers elected

At the annual parish meeting held Sunday, January 31, John Bates, Judy Buchanan, Marie Carter, Calle Luke, Mac McElroy, and David Wise were elected to serve three-year terms on the vestry, joining 12 others who continue their service this year. JB Burtch will continue to serve as senior warden, Laurie Rogers to serve as junior warden, and John Crowder to serve as register. Peter Pastore will continue to serve as the appointed treasurer.

St. Stephen’s is deeply grateful to the six men and women who completed their vestry service with the annual meeting: Lucy Ackerly, Roger Boeve (who served as register), Bruce Evans, Jay Moore, Donnan O’Keefe and Earl Roney.