SAINT STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2025 | THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Sunday Forum series on mental health and wellness continues today

In the Sunday Forum at 10:10 a.m. we will present part three of the four-part series, "Light in the Darkness," focusing on mental health and wellness. This Sunday's focus is mental health and the particularities of aging. We are delighted to welcome the Rev. David Curtis, chaplain at Westminster-Canterbury Richmond. David will reflect on the challenges to and quirks of mental health during the aging process. How does aging re-shape one's meaning and purpose, and how does this affect mental wellness in the elderly? Read more about the series at **ststephensRVA.org/sunday-forum.**

Small group registration is open through February 16

St. Stephen's Church is excited to unveil our lineup of spring small groups. In addition to Emmaus groups and Being With groups we offer a number of special groups including another Universal Christ group based on Richard Rohr's book of the same name; a Celtic spirituality book group; and racial healing circles for those seeking to practice the work of racial justice in conversation with others. Groups take place between the week of March 9 and the week of May 11, inclusive. No prior experience is necessary. In this large church, there is no better way than small groups to connect with others. Learn more and sign up at **ststephensRVA.org/small-groups.**

Trailheads series, 'Radical Optimism,' continues this evening

THROUGH MARCH 9 (EXCEPT FEBRUARY 23) | 7–7:50 P.M.

Trailheads, our Sunday evening adult formation offering, offers an open book group—meaning anyone may participate or simply come and listen—about key concepts from Beatrice Bruteau's *Radical Optimism: Practical Spirituality in an Uncertain World*. The group meets in Palmer Hall, with John Jenkins and Cate Anthony sharing facilitation. No registration is required.

Tonight's discussion is on Chapter 4, The Finite and the Infinite. As you read, notice what bewitches (draws you in), bothers (draws opposition), or bewilders (confounds) you. Bring one or two ideas from the reading to propose for discussion.

From the book: "I believe this radical optimism is the good news of the gospel and I propose that we take it seriously. In this book I am proposing that we take it seriously with respect to the development of the contemplative life" (page 12).

Tending the Spirit: a restorative retreat for all

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 28-SATURDAY, MARCH 1

Are you so busy taking care of others that your own spirit is neglected, weary, strained? When was the last time you devoted time to your own reflection and renewal? Come to an event designed to nourish your spirit while you discover tools to nurture your soul as we enter the season of Lent. Hosted by the Women of St. Stephen's, **this retreat is for all**: women and men, St. Stephen's parishioners and those who attend other churches (or none). The retreat will begin with a concert of Celtic music played on dulcimer and flute, interspersed with readings from *Spirit Wheel*, a book of reflections by the Rt. Rev. Steven Charleston. Saturday will feature sessions on prayer, using prayer beads, and further reflection on *Spirit Wheel*. Our keynote speaker is **the Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff**, who led the Diocese of Virginia through the COVID pandemic while on her own journey with cancer. For details and registration, pick up a brochure at Information Central or visit **ststephensRVA.org/tending-the-spirit**. Registrations are due **February 24**.

Are you new to St. Stephen's? Visiting?
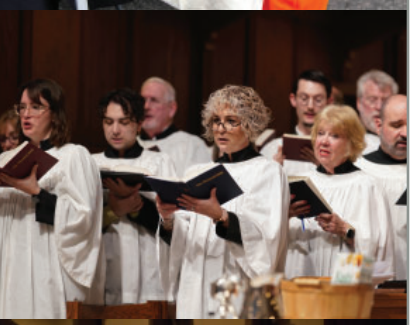
We'd love to welcome you personally. It helps us get to know you better if you fill out a visitor card. If you prefer to do this digitally (or there's no visitor card near your seat), just scan the code and take it from there. If you take this newsletter home (we hope you will!) you can scan the code and complete the form later.













Gumbo for Good: an outreach fundraiser

ORDER DEADLINE: FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21

It's time for the annual gumbo sale to benefit our outreach ministries. Now is your chance to purchase delicious gumbo made by outreach volunteers. Each quart of gumbo ($25) comes with a pan of cornbread. The deadline to order is Friday, February 21, but if we reach capacity before that, orders will close earlier, so don't wait! Orders should be picked up in the church parking lot Sunday, March 2, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. All orders must be prepaid. Online ordering and payment are available at **ststephensRVA.org/outreach.** If you have questions, please contact Anna Jones, **ajones@ststephensRVA.org**, or Kitty Ball, **kball@ststephensRVA.org.** Thanks for your support!

Medical doctor to discuss health and aging this Wednesday

WEDNESDAYS IN FEBRUARY | 6:30 P.M.

The challenges of aging are obvious; yet as we age, opportunities surface and wait for us to grasp them. By faith, aging can be a redemptive journey toward wholeness. The spiritual possibilities can blossom as at no other phase of life. In a series of presentations collectively titled "As We Age," we can discover the true meaning of aging, and recognize that at any stage of life we can discover God as never before. This Wednesday, February 12, we will hear a doctor's view of aging. "Aging as a Physical Journey" seems to be an obvious topic. But Amy McConnell, M.D., will describe not simply how our bodies age, but how we can manage our health to offer the fullest possible life. Descriptions of subsequent sessions are available at **ststephensRVA.org/wednesdays**.

AGO event here features Rebecca te Velde

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 18 | 6 P.M. DINNER, 7 P.M. PROGRAM

The Richmond Chapter of the American Guild of Organists will welcome composer Rebecca Groom te Velde for a program to be held here at St. Stephen's Church. She will discuss her background, approach to composition, and her work as co-editor of the Oxford Hymn Settings for Organists series. She and several chapter members will play examples from the most recent volumes of the Oxford series that showcase a breadth of styles and compositional techniques. Both the dinner and the program are open to the public, but registration for dinner will close on February 11. Dinner is $25 per person, and seating is limited to 100 people. To register, visit **ststephensRVA.org/concerts**. (And yes, she and Brent are related–Rebecca is Brent's mother!)

St. Stephen's Choir sings for Three Choirs Concert

SUNDAY, MARCH 2 | 7 P.M.

The Three Choirs Concert is an annual tradition combining the musical forces of three Episcopal churches in Richmond: St. James's, St. Paul's, and St. Stephen's. This year's event is hosted by St. James's where the choirs, accompanied by an orchestra, will sing Karl Jenkins' *Miserere: Songs of Mercy and Redemption*, who dedicated the work to all who have suffered or perished in the Middle East over the last 70 years. This Welsh composer was moved by the desperate situation for the millions of people displaced and affected by the cruel effects of war, and hoped the healing and uniting powers of music could help bring together people of different faiths. Built around verses from Psalm 51, the multi-movement work combines multiple musical styles and interweaves texts ranging from St. Thomas Aquinas to Rumi to Dylan Thomas.

Young adults: come for lunch today and dinner this Thursday

Are you a young adult at St. Stephen's are looking for more connection and engagement? Join us for lunch today and dinner on Thursday. Today we are meeting in the Café @ St. Stephen's, 12:30 to 2 p.m., for a potluck lunch and discussion of spring offerings. Even if you did not sign up or bring a dish, we'd love for you to join us.

This Thursday, February 13, you're invited to our monthly dinner gathering. We meet at 6:30 p.m. on the second Thursday of the month at a different location, and this one will be at the Greek Taverna, 1903 Staples Mill Rd., near Willow Lawn. Sign up at **ststephensRVA.org/young-adults.**



Summer mission trip planned for youth

SUNDAY, JUNE 29-FRIDAY, JULY 4 | DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 16

Youth in grades 8 through 11 are invited to participate in a mission trip to Asheville, North Carolina, this summer. In partnership with Youth Mission Co, we'll deepen our faith as we engage in service projects addressing homelessness, poverty, and food insecurity, and take part in worship, evening programs, and community building. This experience is designed to provide young people insight into social justice while offering opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. The cost is $600, with a $300 deposit due by February 16 to secure one of 15 available spots. Don't miss this chance to serve, learn, and connect. All participants must complete an online registration form as well as a written registration to be submitted in person. Your registration is complete only when we have received your deposit, online registration, and written registration. Links are available at **ststephensRVA.org/youth.**

An invitation to the Episcopal Church

SUNDAYS, MARCH 16 – APRIL 27 | 7-7:50 P.M.

An Invitation to the Episcopal Church–sometimes called an Inquirers Class –is especially for those who are new to the Episcopal Church, but it can be an enriching experience for any who simply want to deepen their knowledge or who'd like a refresher. It serves as preparation for adults to be confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church during our annual visit from one of our bishops.

The next class will take place over seven Sundays, March 16 – April 27 (no meeting on Easter Day, April 20), from 7 to 7:50 p.m. in the Café @ St. Stephen's. Scan the QR code to register.

Information about our annual meeting

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23 | 10:10 A.M.

The annual parish meeting will take place during the Sunday morning formation hour on February 23 in the fellowship hall. There will be formation offerings that day. Nursery and expanded childcare will be provided for all children, infants through 5th grade so that parents may attend the meeting. Adult volunteers will supervise elementary age children in the undercroft and/or playground, depending on weather, during their usual formation time. The nursery will be open as usual from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. with nursery staff for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, including during the annual meeting. Youth are invited to attend the meeting and sit with their peers and youth ministry coordinator Caroline Harris. The meeting will include presentations by the vestry nominating committee, the treasurer, senior warden, and rector, and a new video. If you are unable to attend, you may watch via livestream, though there will be no remote voting. Read about the vestry slate at **ststephensRVA.org/vestry-nominees.**

Thanks to all who have participated in annual giving (it's not too late)

The leadership of St. Stephen's Church is deeply grateful to the 806 individuals, couples, and families who have made financial commitments (at presstime) to sustain and expand our ministries for 2025. **We are thrilled that we have exceeded our financial goal of $2,750,000 by $60,374 so far.** We are also grateful that St. Stephen's vestry was able to adopt a balanced budget at its January meeting. We continue to work on the participation goal of 875 households, so if you have not yet made a pledge for 2025, it's not too late. Please visit **ststephensRVA.org/pledge** today, or pick up a pledge card and reply envelope at Information Central, the large table just outside the church office. We cannot stress it enough: every pledge is important, no matter the size, because when we all take part, great things can happen. Special thanks to the families of Palmer Hall, who exceeded their participation goal of 55 by 14 pledges. If you have questions or would like to make your pledge by phone, please call Susan McNamara, 804.288.2867.

Year-end statements have been mailed

Year-end statements for contributions made in 2024 were mailed via USPS last Wednesday, February 5. Please allow a couple of days for postal service delivery. Once you have received yours, if you have any questions about your contribution statement please do not hesitate to email Susan McNamara, **smcnamara@ststephensRVA.org**, or call 804.288.2867.

Summer offerings for families and children

With the support of St. Stephen's family ministry guild, our family ministry staff has been re-visioning summer offerings for children and families. This summer we will offer an exciting new variety of opportunities for these ages.

Since we know that many parents have begun planning for the summer, we want you to know now that these changes include replacing Vacation Bible School with a fresh variety of options. Some will be for whole families and others will be designed for specific age groups.

After much feedback and reflection, we concluded that traditional Vacation Bible School was limiting us to a one-size-fits-all summer ministry model. While VBS has long been offered here, families today juggle multiple schedules that include vacations, camps, and other activities and travel. We believe that our new approach will provide this growing segment of our parish more opportunities to engage over the summer.

Within these new offerings will be opportunities for young people and adults who enjoyed volunteering with VBS to engage in new ways to support children and families; however, none of these will be a week-long experience. Dates and details will be available soon, but we wanted you to know now what our approach will be. If you have questions, please contact Abby Kocher, **akocher@ststephensRVA.org**.













Where to find videos of services, sermons, and reflections

Because features of our current website are presented differently than they were on our previous site, we are sometimes asked where to find videos of past livestreamed services. Worship videos, sermons, and reflections are all catalogued on the same page, with filters to help you find what you're looking for. From the main menu on our website, select the Worship and Music tab. Under that tab select "Worship Video Archive." Also: we provide links in the **eSpirit** each week to the past Sunday's sermon, reflection, and Forum.

Farmers market is indoors through March

SATURDAY | 9 A.M.-NOON

Our farmers market is open year-round, rain or shine. In the winter, we have a hybrid indoor-outdoor farmers market, when many vendors are in the fellowship hall, while some remain outdoors. You can find fresh, local greens, root vegetables, squash, mushrooms, eggs, bread, meat, soups and stews, jewelry, and so much more, all winter long. And since our farmers harvest crops (especially greens) just before the market, they stay fresh longer than grocery store produce. Everyone will be back outside in April.

Pastoral announcements

St. Stephen's is a large church and it can be easy to miss important information about fellow parishioners. If you would like to receive an email notice when a parishioner dies, as well as periodic summaries of births and marriages, please scan the QR code to sign up.

While these emails are limited to announcing deaths, marriages, and births of members of the parish, our weekly spoken prayers and printed prayer list continue to include friends and loved ones of parishioners who request those prayers.

'Feed my sheep'

An important ministry of St. Stephen's Church is our "grocery store," a free, client-choice food pantry serving neighbors who need help feeding their families. On Saturdays, volunteers glean unsold produce, eggs, and more from generous vendors at our farmers market. On Sundays, parishioners bring canned and boxed food for the pantry; during services these are presented at the altar along with our monetary offerings. On Mondays, we offer the food to those who need it. We also deliver fresh fruit to residents of low-income housing in Richmond. Consider bringing food each time you come to St. Stephen's and/or volunteering; contact Anna Jones, **ajones@ststephensRVA.org**.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

6000 Grove Avenue | Richmond Virginia 23226
804.288.2867 | ststephensRVA.org

OUR MISSION

Defining who we are and what we do

We are a community of hospitality, healing, and hope, sharing the love of Christ.

OUR VISION

Conveying our hopes and imagination

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life." We gather at God's table to receive that bread and then we go out in love to share it with others, setting tables of hospitality, healing, and hope. Together, we aspire to a world where everyone has a seat at the banquet and all are fed.

OUR CORE VALUES

Our core values and characteristics are described on our website under the "About" tab. They're also available in a printed form at Information Central.

–adopted by St. Stephen's Vestry, July 23, 2024

