

the SPIRIT

Sunday, January 4, 2026 | The Second Sunday of Christmas

Schedule for Christmas II

The season of Christmas lasts until this Tuesday, January 6, the Epiphany. That means today is the Second Sunday of Christmas! As it was last Sunday, the schedule today is a bit different from our regular Sunday schedule. There is no Palmer Hall service, Sunday morning formation, Sunday supper, or Compline service today. All resume next Sunday, January 11. Today's services are:

8 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One

10 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two with Lessons and Carols*

5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion*

Sunday Forum returns January 11 with a new series on contemplative life and ministry

SUNDAYS AT 10:10 A.M.

In a four-week Sunday Forum series leading up to the February 1 commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the first Celtic Evensong and Communion service at St. Stephen's Church, we will explore multiple dimensions of contemplative life and ministry: from foundational forms of prayer and meditation to spiritual direction, rules of life, labyrinth walking, and the central connection between contemplation and action.

The series begins next Sunday, January 11, with a focus on "The Contemplative Roots of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement." The Rev. Dr. J. Lee Hill, Jr., Canon for Racial Justice and Healing for the Diocese of Virginia, will speak about how such thinkers and practitioners as Howard Thurman and Mahatma Gandhi had a profound influence on the theology and practice of the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights leaders. This opening forum reminds us that contemplation is not simply about the inner life, but about how we ground ourselves for faithful engagement with the world. The forum meets in the fellowship hall and no registration is needed. More about the forum and upcoming topics and speakers is available at ststephensRVA.org/sunday-forum.

Women of St. Stephen's program to focus on 'Art for the Journey'

TUESDAY, JANUARY 6 | GATHER AT 9:30 A.M.; PROGRAM AT 10 A.M.

Art for the Journey is a local organization dedicated to harnessing the transformative power of art to support those facing challenges, including illness, trauma, and loss. Through innovative programs and workshops, they provide a safe space for self-expression, healing, and connection for a variety of groups including women at The Lighthouse RVA, those who are incarcerated, veterans, and youth, including students at Anna Julia Cooper School. Art for the Journey has exhibited work by many of these groups in our gallery and café and they are recipients of grant support from the Women of St. Stephen's.

No registration is needed for this free program, but the Women of St. Stephen's will collect art supplies for Art for the Journey: baby wipes, paper towels, large clear Ziploc bags, colored pencils, 11×14 or 12×16 flat canvas boards, construction paper and paint brushes.

Wednesday suppers return this week; Sundays resume January 11

Wonderful Wednesdays suppers have been on a break since mid-December. and they will resume this Wednesday, January 7, 2026. These mid-week suppers take place from **5:45 to 6:30 p.m.** in the fellowship hall. Sunday suppers are back January 11; these take place after the 5:30 p.m. Celtic service and before the 8 p.m. Compline service. We post the menus for Wednesday and Sunday suppers at ststephensRVA.org/menus. These informal, donation-based suppers are a great way to get to know others, enjoy time with family and friends, and take a break from planning, preparing and cleaning up after meals.

Visiting? Newer to St. Stephen's?

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.





Celebrating 20 years of mystery, silence, and awe

It's been nearly 20 years since St. Stephen's Church first held the service known as Celtic Evensong and Communion. If at any point in those two decades this contemplative service has touched your heart and soul, we invite you to write a "love letter" or note expressing what this special service of contemplative worship means to you. Scan the QR code to read more and submit a letter. Or you may send a letter to St. Stephen's Church in care of the Rev. John Jenkins. We will share these compiled messages during our 20th anniversary celebration, February 1, 2026. Soon we'll announce more of the ways we're celebrating the important place the Celtic service holds in the life of this parish and the wider community.



An Epiphany service of Lessons and Carols followed by supper

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 | 6 P.M.

January 6 marks the transition from the 12-day season of Christmas to the Epiphany, a feast of the church, and the beginning of the season that lasts until Ash Wednesday and Lent. As part of our celebration of this feast, on January 14 we will have an Epiphany Service of Lessons and Carols in the church. While this type of service is familiar to Episcopalians and Anglicans the world over—the one at King's College, Cambridge is especially famous—it's usually in the context of Christmas, or sometimes Advent. This Epiphany service will celebrate the revelation of Jesus as the son of God, and the sharing of the light of Christ throughout the world.

Following the service we'll burn Christmas greens outdoors; feel free to bring a sprig from your decorations to add to the fire.

A parish supper and chili cook-off take place after the service. This all-ages event will be very similar to our Wonderful Wednesdays suppers and will be donation-based.

The chili cook-off is a good-natured competition that supports our music ministry. Don't worry—if you compete, you do not need to feed everyone at the parish supper! Folks will enjoy small samples of each batch and "vote" for their favorites by dropping money into cups for each one or by making a donation by credit or debit card. The supper will be prepared by our kitchen staff and volunteers. No reservations are needed for the service. RSVPs are appreciated for supper at ststephensRVA.org/epiphany where there is also an entry form for the chili cook-off.

Winter Ministry Night coming this month

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29 | 5:15-7:30 P.M.

A few times during the year, members of various standing committees of the vestry gather for supper, fellowship, and sharing about what is happening at St. Stephen's Church. This gathering time concludes with a simple worship service, after which individual committees may meet to discuss upcoming plans for their area of ministry. Everyone is welcome at Ministry Night, whether you are on one of the committees or not. This is a great way to learn about the various ministries happening here, and how and where you might plug in. The next Ministry Night is coming January 29. If you plan to attend, please let us know by scanning the QR code and completing a simple RSVP so we'll know how much supper to prepare.



Youth mission trip for summer 2026: Charleston, S.C.

JUNE 16-19, 2026

Youth in grades 8-11 are invited to participate in a mission trip to Charleston, S.C. Partnering with Youth Mission Co, participants will seek to deepen their faith through service to others, worship, evening programs, and community-building activities. This experience is designed to provide youth with valuable insights into social justice with opportunities for personal and spiritual growth. Young people will be immersed in one

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of the oldest cities in our nation and learn about the area's rich history as well as its current situation. From slavery to continuing racial-economic disparities, we will examine common threads, serve our neighbors, and reflect on God's call to justice and equity.

The cost is \$600. A \$300 deposit is required by February 1, 2026, to secure one of 12 available spots. Don't miss this chance to serve, learn, and connect. In addition to an electronic registration, each youth applicant must complete a written registration which they submit in person. Read more by scanning the QR code.



Serve in St. Stephen's youth ministry

Do you care about the spiritual lives of young people? Do you have a heart for listening, guiding, or simply showing up with snacks and a smile? Whether you want to dive into this ministry weekly or help out behind the scenes, there's a place for you here. St. Stephen's youth ministry is made possible by faithful adults who walk alongside youth in grades 6–12. Together, we're creating a community of belonging, curiosity, laughter, and faith. You can help make that possible. No experience is required—just a willing spirit and an open heart—and training and support are provided. We'd love to learn more about your gifts and how you might serve. Scan the QR code to sign up.



Reviving St. Stephen's jail ministry

Our previously successful jail ministry at the Richmond Justice Center (the City Jail) was forced to disband during the pandemic. We're grateful to announce that it is coming back in a different form in partnership with Richmond REAL LIFE. This nonprofit organization has been serving the Richmond community for a decade, providing treatment and housing for people seeking support after being released from jail or prison. Our team will conduct Bible study based on Scripture passages read during our worship services here. We will also offer Holy Eucharist. John Gayle, a St. Stephen's parishioner, was instrumental in founding our ministry to the incarcerated. He has said, "When we are there sharing our feelings and thoughts with those who are suffering, the mutual humanity is so pervasive, it's as if Jesus is in the room."

John is leading this new effort and we seek other men to join him in visiting the men of Richmond REAL LIFE. Please contact our director of outreach and engagement, Jennifer Bousquet (jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org) to express interest or find out more. If this effort is successful, we plan to expand the ministry to include visits by female parishioners with formerly incarcerated women.

Bible study to focus on Acts of the Apostles

THURSDAYS, JANUARY 22–MARCH 12 | 10 A.M.

Written by the author of the Gospel of Luke, the Acts of the Apostles continues the story of Jesus' followers. Acts begins by describing the events, confusion, and challenges followers of Jesus experienced immediately following his death. In the opening verses of each book, the writer states his objective: to write "about all that Jesus did and taught" (Acts 1:1) "so that you may know the truth" (Luke 1:4). Beginning on January 22, the Thursday morning Bible study will dive into Acts and explore the earliest days of the church. We meet in Room 14; all are welcome and no previous experience is required.

Wednesday evening series—Being With: Creation

WEDNESDAYS, JANUARY 21, 28, FEBRUARY 4 | 6:30 P.M.

Building on the Rev. Samuel Wells' visit to St. Stephen's in November 2025, this class will use his *Being With* curriculum to dive into questions about creation care, a theology of creation, and how Christians can contend with the climate crisis. *Being With: Creation* sessions will include a time of shared wondering, a short "talk," and time for reflective conversation. Sessions will be moderated by the Rev. Cate Anthony. All are welcome.

- January 21: A Crisis for Christians
- January 28: Enjoying Creation
- February 4: What can we do?

Called to serve: ushers and greeters

How did you feel when you first visited St. Stephen's Church? Were you warmly welcomed, seen, acknowledged? For most people, their first encounter at a church is pivotal. Several of our long-serving, dedicated ushers and greeters are taking a well-earned break, so there is a current need and a place (several!) for you in either of these vital ministries that mean so much in our common life. Ushers serve once every five weeks at the 11:15 a.m. Sunday service. Greeters serve about once a month on a flexible schedule before either the 9 or 11:15 service. Training is included for each of these important ministries. Express your interest to serve or simply learn more by contacting the Rev. John Jenkins at jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org or 804.288.2867.

Our indoor-outdoor market is underway

SATURDAY | 9 A.M.–NOON

Remember that our farmers market is open year-round except the Saturday after Christmas. Yesterday we began our hybrid indoor-outdoor market, when many vendors move into the fellowship hall while some choose to remain outdoors. We will continue this pattern through February. Everyone will be back outside in March. Remember, our market is open rain or shine. 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 their crops (especially greens) just before the market, they will stay fresh much longer than grocery store produce.



Backpacks for students

About this time of year, school supplies tend to run out or break down. If you have a new or gently used backpack appropriate for students, please consider donating it to benefit the students of Anna Julia Cooper School or Fairfield Court Elementary School. We will accept donations at the outreach table during the month of January. Contact Jennifer Bousquet, jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org, with any questions.

It's not too late to make a pledge

While we continue to celebrate the progress we've made since the October launch of our annual giving campaign, the campaign is not over until we reach our goals! We are so grateful to all who have pledged so far. If you have not made a commitment for 2026, please do so as soon as possible! Visit ststephensRVA.org/annual-giving-campaign to learn more and pledge online, or visit Information Central for a pledge card.

Offering envelopes available

If you make pledge payments using checks with your name printed on them, you may enclose them in any envelope (or none) before placing them in an offering plate, but for those who prefer them, packets of generic weekly envelopes (with dates printed on them but no name) are available at Information Central for use in 2026.

Are you new to this community of faith?

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5 | 5:30-7 P.M.

A few times during the year, the rector, parish staff, and the hospitality committee host a reception for those who are new to this community of faith. If you've recently joined St. Stephen's Church, or you have visited but have not yet decided whether this will become your church home, you are invited to the next reception on February 5. At these informal gatherings, we enjoy appetizers, wine, non-alcoholic beverages, and conversation. This is an opportunity for you to meet our clergy and staff, as well as others who are discovering St. Stephen's Church—and for everyone to get to know more about you. If you can attend, please complete the RSVP at ststephensRVA.org/newcomer.

When weather affects our schedule

How do you know if weather affects office hours and events at St. Stephen's Church?

- Be sure you are subscribed to the **eSpirit** (scan the QR code). This list is the main way we contact you with special announcements.
- Visit our Facebook page ([ststephensRVA](https://www.facebook.com/ststephensRVA)).
- Call the office (804.288.2867); the recording notes weather closings.
- Visit our website at ststephensRVA.org/inclement-weather.



Since we do not use local TV and radio to announce cancellations, closings, or other adjustments to our schedule, any mention of events being affected at "St. Stephen's Church" or "St. Stephen's Episcopal Church," refers to a different St. Stephen's.

When the parish office is closed for inclement weather, there is no weekday Morning Prayer service or livestream; the Café @ St. Stephen's and May Fair House are closed, and no on-site events or meetings take place. If you have a pastoral emergency when the office is closed, call 804.288.2867, and press 4.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

A community of hospitality, healing, and hope, sharing the love of Christ.

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