

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2026 | THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

Sunday Forum returns today with 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 today 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.

Regular Sunday schedule resumes today

Our regular Sunday schedule resumes today with services at 8 a.m., 9 a.m. (including in Palmer Hall), 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday suppers also resume today; these take place after the 5:30 p.m. Celtic service and before the 8 p.m. Compline service. Child care is available during the 9, 11:15 a.m., and 5:30 p.m. services.

This Wednesday: Epiphany Festival of Lessons and Carols, supper, and chili cook-off

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 14 | 6 P.M.

Tuesday, January 6 was the Feast of the Epiphany, and this Wednesday we will have an Epiphany Festival of Lessons and Carols in the church. While this type of service is familiar to Episcopalians and Anglicans the world over, it's usually in the context of Christmas or Advent. This service will celebrate the revelation of Jesus as the son of God, and the sharing of the light of Christ. Following the service we burn Christmas greens outdoors; bring a sprig from your Christmas decorations to add to the fire.

A chili cook-off takes place after the service, along with an informal, donation-based supper. The chili cook-off is a good-natured competition supporting our music ministry. You can try samples of each batch and "vote" for your favorite by dropping money into a cup or making a donation by credit or debit card. An entry form for the chili cook-off is at ststephensRVA.org/epiphany.

Celebrating 20 years of awe, silence, and radical welcome

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 1

On the first Sunday in February 2006, St. Stephen's Church held its inaugural Celtic-inspired worship service, recasting ancient and traditional Christian worship in a mold of radical hospitality, beauty, and contemplative authenticity. On Saturday, January 31, and Sunday, February 1, we'll mark the 20th anniversary and honor what this service has contributed to the life of St. Stephen's. The weekend includes a visit from Westina Matthews, a highly-sought author, speaker, teacher and spiritual director who will lead an afternoon retreat on Saturday focusing on contemplative practice in contemporary life. On Sunday morning she will preach during the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services and speak at the Sunday Forum. On Sunday evening the 5:30 Celtic service will include special music and prayers, and the Sunday supper will be particularly festive and will be followed by a brief program honoring the legacy and future of the Celtic service, celebrating the valued place of contemplative ministry within the life of St. Stephen's Church. We will also dedicate a portrait of our former rector, the Rev. Gary Jones, whose creativity and gifts led to the introduction of the Celtic service, centering radical hospitality and contemplative life at St. Stephen's. Details about the weekend and how to participate are at ststephensRVA.org/celtic20.

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.





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 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.



Today's reception host

Thank you to St. Stephen's altar guild for hosting the reception following today's 11:15 a.m. service. If your group or ministry would like to host a reception, please be in touch with Marilyn Kirkpatrick; you can reach her through the Women of St. Stephen's email address, woss@ststephensRVA.org.

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 lectionary-based Bible study and offer Holy Communion. St. Stephen's parishioner John Gayle, who helped found our ministry

to the incarcerated, says, “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 leads the new effort and seeks other men to join him in these visits. Please contact our director of outreach and engagement, Jennifer Bousquet (jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org) to express interest or learn more. If this ministry proves fruitful, we plan to expand it to include visits by female parishioners with formerly incarcerated women.

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. We are accepting donations at the outreach table throughout January. Contact Jennifer Bousquet, jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org, with any questions.

Share your gifts in ministry; discover new connections in fellowship

“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”—Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Seeker’s ABC*

When the Spirit of God stirs you to seek new connections in fellowship, or growth in Christian formation groups, or ministries that serve the world or the church, two resources are available to you. Everything St. Stephen’s Church offers is open to all people year-round through the Connect and Serve web page (accessible from the top menu on St. Stephen’s home page, ststephensRVA.org) which offers helpful information about the full breadth of ministries, fellowship, and formation offerings. (Note that some small groups have fall and winter start and end dates.) You’ll find a form where you may request more information or declare your interest in enrolling in a ministry. Jennifer Bousquet, St. Stephen’s director of outreach and engagement, and the Rev. John Jenkins, associate rector, wholeheartedly welcome and invite a personal conversation to explore new possibilities and next steps; just email one of them (jbousquet or jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org) or call 804.288.2867 to make an appointment.

Bible study to focus on the 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.

‘Creative Gatherings Bringing Friends Together’

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3 | 5:30 P.M. | REGISTER BY JANUARY 26

Join the Women of St. Stephen’s Church in the fellowship hall for Ladies Night Out, a festive annual event beginning with a reception and continuing with an elegant dinner and guest speaker. This year it’s Foxye Morgan of Pharsalia, an historic flower farm and event venue. Registration is open through January 26 at ststephensRVA.org/woss and you may register a guest or guests. Things to know:

- Reservations are \$35 per person and should be made online.
- The registration form includes online payment (preferred) but checks will be accepted through January 26.
- If you wish to reserve a table, you may register a group of four to eight people.

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. Sessions are: January 21: A Crisis for Christians; January 28: Enjoying Creation; February 4: What can we do?

Vestry to adopt a budget this month

The vestry of St. Stephen’s Church will adopt a budget later this month, and the more information they have about what to expect in terms of your financial support, the more wisely they can budget. We are so grateful for the wonderful response to the annual giving campaign, but it’s not over until we reach our goals! Please help our elected parish leaders make sound plans by making your pledge if you have not already done so. Visit ststephensRVA.org/annual-giving-campaign to pledge online, or visit Information Central for a pledge card. Thank you!

For your calendar: the annual parish meeting will take place **Sunday, February 22**. At that meeting parish leaders will present the budget, the new vestry slate, and other information.

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.



May Fair House reopens this Tuesday

May Fair House, the food and gift shop managed by the Women of St. Stephen's, re-opens Tuesday after its holiday break and will hold an "All-Season Sale." Hours for the shop, which raises funds for community outreach, are: Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 a.m.-3 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m.-noon, and Sundays, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.; closed on Mondays.

Art at St. Stephen's Church

St. Stephen's art ministry is exhibiting work by students from St. Catherine's and St. Christopher's schools through February in the Café @ St. Stephen's, the hallway leading to the café, and the coffee lounge adjacent to the fellowship hall. Also, May Fair House dedicates a room to local artists selling paintings, pottery and other media.

Thank you for a beautiful Advent and Christmas

Thank you to all who contributed to St. Stephen's Advent and Christmas, including:

Writers of insightful reflections for our daily Advent meditation series sent to more than 1,600 subscribers. Readers were deeply moved by your contributions.

Those who contributed so faithfully and beautifully to our Advent and Christmas services, including St. Stephen's choirs and instrumentalists, the altar guilds (church and Palmer Hall), flower guild, liturgical participants, acolytes, readers, greeters, ushers, bulletin collators and all other volunteers, clergy, and staff.

Those who made financial donations to the flower guild for the wreaths that welcomed people throughout Advent and Christmas, and exquisite Christmas arrangements the guild created for December 24 and 25 services.

Brandy Singleton, Lauren Turner, and Carrie Pennypacker who coordinated our wonderful all-ages Advent Fair and all the adult and youth volunteers who assisted.

All who made the 100th Christmas pageant memorable, transforming wooden carts, costumes, and tinsel halos into the story of Christ's birth: event co-chairs Shelley Spalding, Ara Hobbs, and Whitney Van Der Hyde, and to cart movers, readers, costumed cast members, and parent volunteers who made the pageant and reception happen. Thanks to those who participated in the video about the pageant's history.

This year's leadership for the Live Nativity: Dianne Del Bueno, Sarah Paulette, and Lolly Hodge. Forty-five children participated on a night that was so cold the animals had to stay home! Also to the many parents who helped with costumes, served as wardens for each station, and otherwise joyfully supported so many children in their roles on this memorable holiday offering for our parish and the wider community.

Kim Schmidt for her stunning photographs of these events.

Those making special donations so food pantry visitors could select festive Christmas foods.

Those who took part in the Christmas Shop held for families of Fairfield Court Elementary School and Anna Julia Cooper School, including those who donated toys and other items, volunteers who sorted, transported and arranged the items at Fairfield, and the outreach committee and shop coordinator Beth Moore.

EpiscoPals for their assistance with office tasks and providing sustenance (snacks as well as a special lunch) to the staff during these busy weeks.

The nearly 3,000 people who attended services on December 24 and 25.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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