

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026 | THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Today, a celebration of 20 years of awe, silence, and radical welcome

On the first Sunday in February 2006, St. Stephen's Church held its inaugural Celtic-inspired worship service. This weekend, its 20th anniversary, we are embracing and honoring the many ways this visionary contemplative service has touched and shaped individual lives alongside the large life and consciousness of St. Stephen's, and continues to do so.

This weekend's events include the leadership and preaching of Dr. Westina Matthews, a highly-sought author, speaker, teacher and leader among spiritual directors. She led a retreat here yesterday, and this morning she will preach during the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services and conclude the Sunday Forum series, "New perspectives on contemplative life."

The 5:30 Celtic service will include extra prelude music beginning at 5:20 and the premier of new sacred pieces composed for the 20th anniversary by Michael Simpson, who will join our musicians for the service (see next announcement). A program at the Sunday community supper (6:30-7:45) will include highlights from the "Love letters to the Celtic Service" project; volunteer recognition; a panel discussion featuring Michael Simpson, Guy Frank, and Susan Wilkes; and the dedication of the portrait of the former rector, the Rev. Gary Jones, who developed the Celtic service and through it centered radical hospitality and contemplative life at the heart of St. Stephen's Church.

Music notes for this evening's Celtic Evensong and Communion

The music for this evening's Celtic service was selected by current associate director of music Diana Chou and former associate director of music Michael Simpson. With gratitude we welcome him back to St. Stephen's Church to share in playing piano for this evening's service. It will encompass many pieces and composers with a long history at the service, as well as some more newly-introduced compositional voices that have joined the service's continually expanding musical "canon" and soundscape in recent years. Michael and Diana have chosen some of their very favorite pieces from their combined years of playing at St. Stephen's, and they are joined by flutist Sue DeJesus, who has played for the Celtic service since its earliest days here, and longtime Celtic cantor Abby Outlaw. The second candle-lighting piece will be a setting of the traditional Irish tune, "The lark in the clear air," composed by Joseph Martin especially for our Celtic community and dedicated to the music ministry of St. Stephen's.

Michael has also composed new service music in honor of this weekend's 20th anniversary celebration. We look forward to premiering his new *Sanctus* and Lamb of God settings and singing those over the next few weeks, as well as at regular intervals in the future!

New series begins in the forum next Sunday: 'Liturgy Unplugged'

Episcopalians are a people deeply connected to our shared worship. Much of our Episcopal formation takes place during worship, through the use of the Book of Common Prayer and other resources. In this series, join St. Stephen's clergy as we take a deep dive into the shape and content of the Eucharistic service, discovering what our worship has to tell us about living in the world faithfully. For the first Sunday in this series, February 8, the Rev. Cate Anthony will focus on "The Liturgy of the Word," examining the first half of the Eucharist. We'll consider the role of Scripture in worship as well as the origins and purpose of our wide variety of prayers. In this deep dive, we will explore the ways this aspect of our worship shapes our personal prayer and public witness as faithful Christians.

The 2026 vestry slate

ANNUAL MEETING: SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22 | 10:10 A.M.

At the upcoming parish meeting, we will vote on a slate of parishioners to serve three-year terms on the vestry. A vestry-appointed nominating committee composed of outgoing vestry members and at-large members received suggestions from you about people to consider, and they are pleased to present the following slate: **James Driscoll, Meg Eckman, Wortie Ferrell, Darrell Headrick, Chip Jamerson, and Katie Webb**. Thank you to the committee, those who made suggestions, and those who agreed to have their names put forward. Information and photos: ststephensRVA.org/vestry-nominees.

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.





Sunday morning for parents

SUNDAYS AT 10:10 A.M.

Many Parents, One Vine is a weekly formation group for parents offering mutual support and fellowship as we reflect on the challenges and blessings of parenting faithfully in the modern age. This spring, the group will focus on a Bible study using the Gospel of the day. As we dive into the Scripture, reflecting on the word of God and its message for us, we'll use it as a springboard for conversations about life, parenting, and faith. We meet in Room 14. No prior experience is required. Questions: the Rev. Cate Anthony, canthony@ststephensRVA.org.

Participate in a family ministry discernment process

The family ministry guild is a group of St. Stephen's parishioners who work with church staff to plan and lead ministries for children, youth, and parents. The guild has commissioned a discernment process concerning formation for these groups at St. Stephen's Church. Through a prayerful process, we seek to discover the shape, purpose, and priorities of the breadth of family ministries at this moment in the life of the parish. The discernment group will engage a broad array of parishioners through a variety of means including facilitated focus groups for both children's and youth ministries, and a survey. Using the information gathered and working with an outside consultant, the guild and staff will adapt formation offerings, integrating what we learn to respond meaningfully to the needs of contemporary families. All are welcome to participate and we especially invite parents of children from birth to age 18 to join us for one of these important conversations. We also welcome other adults who have served as volunteers in children's or youth ministry. Scan the QR code to sign up. Questions: the Rev. Cate Anthony, canthony@ststephensRVA.org.



Are you new to St. Stephen's? Come to a reception Thursday

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

If you've recently joined St. Stephen's Church, or you have visited but have not yet decided if this will become your church home, you are invited to the next newcomers reception this Thursday. At these informal gatherings we enjoy appetizers, non-alcoholic beverages, wine, and conversation. Meet clergy and staff as well as others who are discovering St. Stephen's Church. RSVP at ststephensRVA.org/newcomer.

Orientation and welcome to St. Stephen's Church

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 11 | 6:30-7:30 P.M.

To help newcomers find their way at St. Stephen's Church and make meaningful connections, we offer a simple orientation meeting with helpful handouts and resources so you can quickly align your interests and needs with the life, worship, service, fellowship, and spiritual formation we offer, as well as understand how we share information and who is available to offer support and guidance. It's led by the Rev. John Jenkins and Jennifer Bousquet, director of outreach and engagement, in the Café @ St. Stephen's. No sign-up is needed.

Invitation to the Episcopal Church

WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30 P.M., FEBRUARY 25 THROUGH APRIL 15

Invitation to the Episcopal Church is a series for those who are newer here or those who are familiar but newly curious. This introductory class is ideal for meeting others and exploring more about the Episcopal Church; topics include our unique identity and perspective, origins, worship, beliefs, practices, and more. This is excellent preparation if you are considering becoming an Episcopalian through the Rite of Confirmation or Reception; reaffirm your faith; or, if you are an adult who has not been baptized, this is preparation for that sacrament. Most of all, this is a supportive place to ask questions big and small. It will be co-led by the Rev. Will Stanley and the Rev. John Jenkins in our café. Scan the QR code to register.



Outreach grant application available

The application process for outreach grants began January 15, and applications are due February 13. If you are involved with a local organization that would like to apply for a grant, please send them to ststephensRVA.org/outreach/partnerships for an application and further details.

Take part in the Prayers of the People

The “Prayers of the People” are a key part of corporate worship each Sunday. At St. Stephen’s Church, they take a variety of forms throughout the church year and across different worship services: our traditional 8 a.m. service, the Palmer Hall service, the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services, and the Celtic service. Consistent threads involve our prayers for the life of our world, nation, and community, including the hard realities of suffering and death. Finding ways to offer prayers that honor both the universality and the particularity of our human experience is a constant opportunity and challenge. If you’ve worshipped with us over the past few weeks, you may have noticed that we no longer pray by name for certain groups of people or places of conflict, suffering, and loss. Rather, we are inviting each person gathered to join in: specifically, for “those people and places we name now, either silently or aloud.” We have made this shift to allow for the fullness of our community’s experience—the truths on our hearts—to be offered in prayer, in all their diversity. So the next time we say the Prayers of the People, please join us.

Share your gifts; discover new connections

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; schedule a time by emailing one of them ([jbousquet](mailto:jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org) or jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org) or calling 804.288.2867.

Today is the deadline for the youth mission trip

JUNE 16-19, 2026 | APPLICATIONS DUE FEBRUARY 1

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 today to secure a spot.** Don’t miss this chance to serve, learn, and connect. Scan the QR code to learn more.

Superbowling for children, youth, and parents

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 8

St. Stephen’s children, youth, and families are invited to enjoy an afternoon of bowling and fellowship at River City Roll next Sunday. Parents and children meet at River City Roll (939 Myers St. in Richmond, 23230-4812) at 2 p.m. We’ll wrap up around 4 p.m. so you’ll be home in time for the Super Bowl. (If you need to leave earlier, that’s fine.)

Youth will gather at 1:30 p.m. in front of the Café @ St. Stephen’s to board St. Stephen’s vans and return to the church for a 4:15 p.m. pick-up time. Friends are welcome, but they must complete the sign-up form.

The fee of \$15 per person covers bowling and shoe rental; there is no charge for kids 3 and under, and the family maximum is \$45. When you register, you’ll receive a confirmation email which includes information about how to pay the fees. Registration forms are at ststephensRVA.org/super-bowling.

Annual ‘souper bowl’ helps fill pantry shelves

Who will win the Super Bowl next Sunday? Vote for your team by placing cans of soup at the outreach table in front of the team name—the Seattle Seahawks or the New England Patriots—at the outreach table. Voting with multiple cans is encouraged and helps stock our pantry.

Interested in being in our handbell choir?

St. Stephen’s handbell choir rings at Sunday services several times during the year, and is blessed to have an excellent set of new Malmark handbells. Are you interested in ringing with our handbell choir? We have an opening for someone with two years or more of musical experience and the ability to read notes. Contact Paul Honaker, director, at bell-choir@ststephensRVA.org or call 804.288.2867 to leave a message.

Small groups registration opens this week

REGISTRATION OPEN FEBRUARY 5-22

St. Stephen’s Church offers a variety of small groups for adults, including Emmaus groups, Being With groups, and focus groups. Sign-up opens February 5 for upcoming groups which will meet beginning the week of March 8. More details are available at ststephensRVA.org/small-groups.

Ladies Night Out postponed

The Women of St. Stephen’s have postponed Ladies Night Out to April 28. If you had a ticket already, it will be honored on the new date. If you cannot attend on April 28, you can receive a refund. More information is coming soon.



Young adults monthly dinner coming soon

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 12 | 6:30 P.M.

Each month, young adults from St. Stephen's Church gather at a local restaurant for fellowship, food, and fun. Friends are welcome! This month we'll meet at the Continental Westhampton on Grove Avenue just a few blocks east of the church. RSVPs are helpful so that we'll be sure to reserve enough space; go to ststephensRVA.org/youngadults.

'Being With: Creation' concludes this week

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH FEBRUARY 4 | 6:30 P.M.

Building on the Rev. Samuel Wells' visit to St. Stephen's in November 2025, this class has been using 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 include time for shared wondering, a short "talk," and time for reflective conversation. Sessions are moderated by the Rev. Cate Anthony. All are welcome. The remaining session is this Wednesday, February 4, "What can we do?"



Upcoming ordinations

Two ordinations of interest to the people of St. Stephen's Church will take place soon. The Rt. Rev. Gayle Harris, Assistant Bishop of Virginia, will ordain the Rev. Bart Natoli, along with Jackson Davey and Ted Renaud, to the Sacred Order of Priests on February 7 at 10:30 a.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Richmond (520 N. Arthur Ashe Blvd). St. Stephen's Church sponsored Bart, currently a transitional deacon, for ordination. On March 7 at 10:30 a.m., Bishop Harris will ordain Paige Trivett to the Sacred Order of Deacons, along with John Hager, Joshua House, and Emily Rutledge. The service takes place at St. Dunstan's Episcopal Church in McLean, and a livestream will be available on St. Dunstan's website. For directions to St. Dunstan's or to see the livestream, visit stdunstans.net. Paige served as our summer seminarian last year. All are invited to these services, and are asked to keep these servants in your prayers.



St. James's Church presents WomanKind

APRIL 24-26

The women of St. James's, Richmond, invite you to a transformative, two-day conference dedicated to exploring themes of faith and the vital roles of women in the church and broader society. The 2026 WomanKind conference, "One Body," will feature internationally recognized author, activist, and speaker Lisa Sharon Harper as keynote speaker. Ms. Harper will guide participants in exploring what it means to be One Body and how we can pursue God's intent for wholeness in all relationships. Since its inception in 2004, the WomanKind conference has provided a space for women to find inspiration, theological depth, and practical guidance on issues of faith, leadership, and their evolving roles in the world. This is a popular event, so be sure to register soon! More details are at stjamesrva.org/womankind.



Today's reception hosts

Thank you to the Gracious Gourmets who are hosting the reception after today's 11:15 a.m. service. This group delivers meals to those who have experienced a loss or welcomed a new baby. For information on this group, or on hosting a Sunday reception, send an email to the Women of St. Stephen's at woss@ststephensRVA.org.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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