

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026 | THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

'Liturgy Unplugged' concludes in forum today with a focus on music

Episcopalians are 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 our series, "Liturgy Unplugged," St. Stephen's clergy have been taking a deep dive into the shape and content of the Eucharistic service, discovering what our worship tells us about living in the world faithfully. Today the series concludes with the Rev. John Rohrs and our new director of music, Robert McCormick. In addition to introducing himself, Robert will speak about the role of music in liturgy. How do our musicians make decisions about music each week? What informs those choices? Get to know Robert and learn more about our rich music tradition. On Sunday, March 8, we'll begin a new series; see the next announcement.

Challenged by the Word: Grappling with difficult Biblical texts

SUNDAYS, MARCH 8, 15, AND 22 | 10:10 A.M.

The Bible is full of passages that challenge us as we read them. How do we contend with these challenges faithfully while also honoring what the Bible teaches us about God and the life of faith? In this series we will consider a variety of thought-provoking Biblical texts to discover the hidden treasures within. The forum takes place in the fellowship hall; no registration is needed. Descriptions of individual sessions, including topics and speakers, are at ststephensRVA.org/sunday-forum.

Praying shapes believing: Trailheads series on evening worship begins tonight

SUNDAYS, MARCH 1-29 | 7:00-7:50 P.M. IN THE CAFÉ

How we pray shapes what we believe; this is a deep truth that involves the style and content of the worship service as much as how one approaches and participates with the mind, body, and heart. This Lenten series explores aspects of our evening services as well as for Holy Week. Each topic will consider practices to help you deepen or enliven your experience of worship. The final session, held on the threshold of Holy Week, explores its worship services, the rites at the heart of Christian proclamation.

Tonight's session is "Music at the Celtic service and Compline." Explore the soundscapes of our evening services and learn ways to deepen your experience in worship. Diana Chou, associate director of music, and the Rev. Cate Anthony, associate rector, will discuss the intricate choices and intentions that weave together the music of the Celtic service; background about Compline's chanted prayers and choral music sung by Sanctuary, our mixed a cappella chamber choir; and practices that anyone may try that are based on how they themselves open mind, heart, and spirit to the experience of listening, being present, and participating more deeply in worship.

Invitation to the Episcopal Church continues Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. through April 15

Invitation to the Episcopal Church is a series for those who are newer here or those who are familiar yet newly curious. This introductory class is ideal for those who wish to meet others and explore 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; reaffirming your faith; or, if you are an adult who has not been baptized, this serves as preparation for that sacrament. Most of all, this is a supportive place to ask questions big and small. It is co-led by the Rev. Will Stanley and the Rev. John Jenkins in our café. The class started last Wednesday, but if you missed the first one, you can still attend.



Scan the QR code to register.

TAKE THIS NEWSLETTER HOME TODAY!

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.





Wednesday series: Loving our immigrant and refugee neighbors

MARCH 11, 18, AND 25 | 6:30 P.M.

SACRED CONVERSATION: IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES IN OUR MIDST

For the past few years immigration has been at the forefront of political conversation in the United States. In recent weeks the conversation has come closer to home, as many in our own community express fear for their safety or the safety of loved ones during this period of heightened enforcement. In this Sacred Conversation, participants will reflect on their own experiences and perspectives related to immigrants and refugees. We'll uncover how our lived faith informs our engagement with this important subject.

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR MINISTRY WITH IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES

St. Stephen's clergy will help us deepen our understanding of the church's role in relation to immigrants and refugees. What do our sacred texts say about this complex subject? We will consult the Bible, our tradition, and our church's history to discover a faithful way to engage with and support our immigrant and refugee neighbors.

LOVING OUR IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE NEIGHBORS

A panel of representatives from organizations providing direct service to immigrants and refugees will discuss current challenges and how the community can support their efforts.

Annual meeting wrap-up

At last Sunday's annual meeting, we elected six new vestry members: James Driscoll, Meg Eckman, Darrell Headrick, Wortie Ferrell, Chip Jamerson, and Katie Webb. Vestry members were commissioned during the 11:15 a.m. service, and incoming, outgoing, and continuing members met for lunch after the service. The new and continuing members remained for a meeting and orientation, and elected the following vestry members as officers: Molly Anderson, senior warden; Brandon Spalding, junior warden; Randy Seibert, treasurer; Jay Moore, assistant treasurer; and Gayle Royals, register. Thank you to the dedicated members of the vestry who completed their service: Robert Birdsey, senior warden; Kathy Brock, junior warden; May Fox; Mary Ashburn Pearson, register; and Chris Smith, treasurer.

A video of the annual meeting is available on our website, along with the "Year in Review" video, the PowerPoint shown and the reports distributed at the meeting, ststephensRVA.org/annual-meeting. Hard copies of the reports are also available at Information Central, the large table outside the parish office.

A welcome announcement during the meeting was that we have surpassed the dollar goal for the "Abound in Hope" campaign, with \$3,013,193 in pledges! We continue to work to achieve the participation goal, with 821 pledges toward the goal of 850—just 29 more to reach that goal. Thank you to all who have pledged. If you have not, it's not too late; visit ststephensRVA.org/pledge or pick up a pledge card at Information Central outside the parish office.

A highlight was the presentation and dedication of the portrait of the Rev. Gary D. Jones, our eighth rector, painted by an internationally celebrated painter, Ben Long. Gary sat for the portrait in Ben's studio in Asheville, N.C. This beautiful painting now hangs in our library. Thank you to Martha Sherman and Anne Pinion for shepherding this project, and to the donors—all of whom have asked to remain anonymous—who gave generously to make it possible.

Thursday Bible study: the Acts of the Apostles

THURSDAYS THROUGH 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 after his death. The Thursday morning Bible study is diving into the Book of Acts in Room 14. Join us!

Family ministry 'giving garden' planted today

An exciting partnership between family ministries and outreach ministries is blooming! During today's formation hour, children and their families will plant a "giving garden" to benefit those who visit our food pantry. They will plant peas and carrots in a raised bed near the playground, and will plant tomato and nasturtium seeds in small pots to enjoy at home and in their classrooms.

With God's help, the peas and carrots should be ready to harvest in two to three months. As they tend the garden, our children can remember and pray for those who will enjoy the fruits of their work, also learning that partnerships in community take time and attention, just like gardens. All are welcome to look at the giving garden, but please do not touch, and leave tending the garden to the family ministry team.

We want your voice

Our family ministry team is working with a consultant on a discernment process concerning formation for children and youth 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 St. Stephen's Church. The discernment group is engaging 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, we will adapt formation offerings for children and youth, integrating what we learn to respond meaningfully to the needs of contemporary families. All are welcome to participate. We especially invite parents of children from birth to age 18 to join us for one of these important conversations. Other adults who have served in children's or youth ministry are also welcome.



Sign up using the QR code.

Farmers market is back outside

SATURDAY | 9 A.M.-NOON

Our rain-or-shine farmers market is open year-round except the Saturday after Christmas. After having a "hybrid" market of indoor and outdoor vendors in January and February, everyone will be back outdoors this Saturday and for the rest of the year. You'll find fresh, local greens, root vegetables, squash, mushrooms, eggs, bread, meat, prepared foods, jewelry, crafts, and more. **Hours remain 9 a.m. to noon until May.**

Do you know a young person who loves music?

St. Stephen's Chorister program instills confidence and poise in each chorister, as each learns to be part of a team—both as members and as leaders—whose sum is greater than its parts. We provide choristers with outstanding professional vocal training, music theory, leadership development, and abundant performance opportunities. We welcome young people in grades one and above, inclusive of all genders; join at any point during the year! Read more at ststephensRVA.org/choristers, and be in touch with Robert McCormick, rmccormick@ststephensRVA.org.

Bishop Harris speaks here this Tuesday

TUESDAY, MARCH 3 | GATHER, 9:30 A.M.; PROGRAM, 10 A.M.

The Rt. Rev. Gayle E. Harris has followed in the footsteps of the apostle Paul and will discuss his profound impact on the spread of the early church during the March program of the Women of St. Stephen's. Bishop Harris is the Diocese of Virginia's assistant bishop and the former bishop suffragan of the Diocese of Massachusetts. Please bring a friend to hear her message in the fellowship hall. No sign-up is required.

Collecting toiletries for local organizations

THROUGH MARCH 3

The Women of St. Stephen's are sponsoring a drive for toiletries to be distributed to those served by LighthouseRVA, CrossOver Healthcare Ministry, and our own food pantry. Please bring regular size (not travel or sample size) toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, soap, hand wipes, and feminine hygiene supplies, and place them outside the indoor entrance to the May Fair House. Thank you!

Belvedere Series brings famed quartet here

FRIDAY, MARCH 6 | 7 P.M.

The Belvedere Series welcomes the groundbreaking string quartet OWLS for an evening of bold, style-defying chamber music here at St. Stephen's. Performing in their signature inverted quartet formation—two cellos, viola, and violin—OWLS has become one of the nation's most sought-after ensembles, celebrated for their sonic daring and technical brilliance. Featuring two members of the famed Kronos Quartet, OWLS offers a program spanning centuries, including new works, original arrangements, and reimagined classics. Tickets are \$40 in advance, \$50 at the door. Visit belvedereseries.org for tickets and details.

Information about Westina Matthews' visit

The guest speaker we had hoped could be here last month as part of our focus on contemplative spirituality and the gifts of our Celtic service, **Dr. Westina Matthews**, will be with us in April. Her workshop on contemplative practice in contemporary life will take place Saturday, April 18. She will speak in the Sunday Forum and preach at 9 and 11:15 a.m. on April 19.

New art exhibits on display in March and April

The Café @ St. Stephen's is excited to once again have art from students of Anna Julia Cooper School adorning our space! Stop in for a cup of coffee or tea and enjoy their work.

In the gallery adjacent to the fellowship hall, work by Becky White is on display. Artists use a variety of media—oils, watercolor, pastels, charcoal, pencil—but Becky "paints" with petals. She says this is a continuation of her lifelong relationship with the natural world, including decades as a landscape designer. Stop by to see her creations.

Help us find a part-time sexton

St. Stephen's Church seeks a part-time sexton to join our excellent facilities team. If you know a good candidate, direct them to ststephensRVA.org/employment.



Looking ahead to Holy Week and Easter

It's only the Second Sunday in Lent, but parish staff have already received inquiries about our schedules for Holy Week and Easter. For those planning ahead, here's the schedule. Additional details will be available on our website. Child care is available during services with an asterisk (*).

PALM SUNDAY | MARCH 29

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One with the Liturgy of the Palms and the reading of the Passion (note earlier time)

9 a.m.*, Holy Eucharist: Rite Two with the Liturgy of the Palms and the reading of the Passion; all meet outdoors at the Three Chopt entrance to the church, including those who attend the 9 a.m. service in Palmer Hall. After the Liturgy of the Palms, Palmer Hall participants will process to their service led by Oslick the donkey.

No Sunday morning formation

11:15 a.m.*, Holy Eucharist: Rite Two with the Liturgy of the Palms and the reading of the Passion; all meet outdoors at the Three Chopt entrance to the church

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

6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper

8 p.m., Compline

MAUNDY THURSDAY | APRIL 2

5:30 p.m., Agape Meal and Foot Washing (suitable for all ages)

7:30 p.m., Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

9 p.m., All-night vigil in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit

GOOD FRIDAY | APRIL 3

8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit

Noon, The Liturgy for Good Friday

1:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross (guided); self-guided, anytime from 2 to 4 p.m.

5 p.m., Musical offering: Robert McCormick, director of music, will play improvised organ meditations on the 14 Stations of the Cross interspersed with readings of sonnets for each station by British Anglican priest and poet Malcolm Guite

HOLY SATURDAY | APRIL 4

7:30 p.m., The Great Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter; service begins outdoors at the Three Chopt entrance to the church

EASTER DAY | APRIL 5

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note earlier time)

9 a.m.*, Holy Eucharist: Rite Two in Palmer Hall and in the main church, followed by an Easter egg hunt for children

No Sunday morning formation

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

8 p.m., Compline

Please note that the parish office will be closed Easter Monday, April 6.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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