



Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 7:30 a.m., noon and 7:30 p.m.
Holy Eucharist with Imposition of Ashes
St. Stephen's Episcopal Church & Richmond, Virginia

The Invitation to a Holy Lent

“Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

These words accompany the imposition of ashes, a stark reminder of our mortal nature. In the Hebrew Scriptures, ashes were also symbols of mourning or repentance. People would anoint themselves with ashes as a sign of grief, or to represent humility or remorse over things done or left undone. This ancient ritual is reimagined in the context of this Ash Wednesday liturgy, as we confess our sins against God and one another and pray for mercy and forgiveness.

Thankfully, we believe that God meets us not with a spirit of judgment but with the promise of grace. Like the father running out to meet the prodigal son on the road, God is always ready to embrace us and welcome us home. In that sense, the ashes are not only a reminder of our mortality; they are a reminder that we are God’s children, God’s own creation, formed for life and for love.

Today marks the first of forty days in the season of Lent, a time for reflection and recommitment. We use this time to rend our hearts, in the words of the prophet Joel—to acknowledge and lament the ways we obscure God’s dream for the world. We rend our hearts and ask God to recast them, to create in us new hearts, that we may love as God loves and share in the renewal of creation. Please join us in these weeks ahead. Our services each Sunday are held at 8:00, 9:00, and 11:15 a.m., and at 5:30 and 8:00 p.m. This QR code lists additional formation offerings during this season; all are welcome and we hope that you will join us.



*In order to prepare for worship and allow for private prayer, we ask that silence be observed upon entering the church.
The 7:30 a.m. service is a spoken service. Music will be offered at the Noon and 7:30 p.m. services.*

Voluntary *O Mensch, beweine dein Sünde gross* (O man, bewail thy sins so great)

J. S. Bach

The Word of God

All stand for a silent procession.

The Collect of the Day

Prayer Book, page 264

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Let us pray. *Silence is kept.*

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing you have made and forgive the sins of all who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Please sit.

The Old Testament Lesson Isaiah 58:1-12 *Please sit.*

Reader A Reading from the Prophet Isaiah.

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. “Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?” Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with

a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday. The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail. Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.** *A period of silence is kept.*

Psalm 103: 8-14 *Said responsively by whole verse, seated.*

Prayer Book, page 733

8 The LORD is full of compassion and mercy, *
slow to anger and of great kindness.

**9 He will not always accuse us, *
nor will he keep his anger for ever.**

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins, *
nor rewarded us according to our wickedness.

**11 For as the heavens are high above the earth, *
so is his mercy great upon those who fear him.**

12 As far as the east is from the west, *
so far has he removed our sins from us.

**13 As a father cares for his children, *
so does the LORD care for those who fear him.**

14 For he himself knows whereof we are made; *
he remembers that we are but dust. *Silence is kept.*

The New Testament Lesson 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10 *Please sit.*

Reader A Reading from the Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians.

We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

As we work together with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain. For he says,

“At an acceptable time I have listened to you,
and on a day of salvation I have helped you.”

See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation! We are putting no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we have commended ourselves in every way: through great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, holiness of spirit, genuine love, truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; in honor and dishonor, in ill repute and good repute. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet are well known; as dying, and see—we are alive; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

Reader The Word of the Lord.

People **Thanks be to God.** *A period of silence is kept.*

Hymn 142 [noon and 7:30 p.m.] Lord, who throughout these forty days *Sung by all, standing.* *St. Flavian*

The Gospel Matthew 6:1-6,16-21 *Please remain standing and face the reader of the Gospel.*

Deacon The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Matthew.

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

Jesus said, "Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Deacon The Gospel of the Lord.

People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

The Sermon The Rev. William S. Stanley

The Invitation to the Observance of a Holy Lent *All stand.* Prayer Book, page 264

Celebrant

Dear People of God: The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence and fasting. This season of Lent provided a time in which converts to the faith were prepared for Holy Baptism. It was also a time when those who, because of notorious sins, had been separated from the body of the faithful were reconciled by penitence and forgiveness, and restored to the fellowship of the Church. Thereby, the whole congregation was put in mind of the message of pardon and absolution set forth in the Gospel of our Savior, and of the need which all Christians continually have to renew their repentance and faith.

I invite you, therefore, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word. And, to make a right beginning of repentance, and as a mark of our mortal nature, let us now kneel before the Lord, our maker and redeemer.

Silence is then kept for a time, all kneeling.

Celebrant

Almighty God, you have created us out of the dust of the earth: Grant that these ashes may be to us a sign of our mortality and penitence, that we may remember that it is only by your gracious gift that we are given everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

All who wish to receive ashes may come forward to the main altar or side chapels (Good Shepherd only at 7:30 a.m.). The priest imposes ashes on the forehead, saying:

Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return.

Psalm 51

noon setting: Plainsong, tone IV; 7:30 p.m. setting: Gregorio Allegri

At 7:30 a.m., said in unison, kneeling; at noon and 7:30 p.m., sung by the choir on behalf of the congregation.

- 1 *Miserere mei, Deus:
secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.
Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum,
dele iniquitatem meam.*
- 2 *Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea:
et a peccato meo munda me.*
- 3 *Quoniam iniquitatem meam ego cognosco:
et peccatum meum contra me est semper.*
- 4 *Tibi soli peccavi,
et malum coram te feci:*
- 5 *Ut justificeris in sermonibus tuis,
et vincas cum judicaris.*
- 6 *Ecce enim in iniquitatibus conceptus sum:
et in peccatis concepit me mater mea.*
- 7 *Ecce enim veritatem dilexisti:
incerta et occulta sapientiae tuae manifestasti mihi.*
- 8 *Asperges me hyssopo, et mundabor:
lavabis me, et super nivem dealbabor.*
- 9 *Auditui meo dabis gaudium et laetitiam:
et exsultabunt ossa humiliata.*
- 10 *Averte faciem tuam a peccatis meis:
et omnes iniquitates meas dele.*
- 11 *Cor mundum crea in me, Deus:
et spiritum rectum innova in visceribus meis.*
- 12 *Ne proicias me a facie tua:
et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.*
- 13 *Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui:
et spiritu principali confirma me.*
- 14 *Docebo iniquos vias tuas:
et impii ad te convertentur.*
- 15 *Libera me de sanguinibus, Deus:
Deus salutis meae
et exsultabit lingua mea justitiam tuam.*
- 16 *Domine, labia mea aperies:
et os meum annuntiabit laudem tuam.*
- 17 *Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique:
holocaustis non delectaberis.*
- 18 *Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus:
cor contritum, et humiliatum,
Deus, non despicias.*
- 19 *Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion:
ut aedificentur muri Ierusalem.*
- 20 *Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiae,
oblationes, et holocausta:
tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.*
- 1 **Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your loving-kindness; *
in your great compassion
blot out my offenses.**
- 2 **Wash me through and through from my wickedness *
and cleanse me from my sin.**
- 3 **For I know my transgressions, *
and my sin is ever before me.**
- 4 **Against you only have I sinned *
and done what is evil in your sight.**
- 5 **And so you are justified when you speak *
and upright in your judgment.**
- 6 **Indeed, I have been wicked from my birth, *
a sinner from my mother's womb.**
- 7 **For behold, you look for truth deep within me, *
and will make me understand wisdom secretly.**
- 8 **Purge me from my sin, and I shall be pure; *
wash me, and I shall be clean indeed.**
- 9 **Make me hear of joy and gladness, *
that the body you have broken may rejoice.**
- 10 **Hide your face from my sins *
and blot out all my iniquities.**
- 11 **Create in me a clean heart, O God, *
and renew a right spirit within me.**
- 12 **Cast me not away from your presence *
and take not your holy Spirit from me.**
- 13 **Give me the joy of your saving help again *
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.**
- 14 **I shall teach your ways to the wicked, *
and sinners shall return to you.**
- 15 **Deliver me from death, O God, *
and my tongue shall sing of your righteousness,
O God of my salvation.**
- 16 **Open my lips, O LORD, *
and my mouth shall proclaim your praise.**
- 17 **Had you desired it, I would have offered sacrifice; *
but you take no delight in burnt-offerings.**
- 18 **The sacrifice of God is a troubled spirit; *
a broken and contrite heart,
O God, you will not despise.**
- 19 **Be favorable and gracious to Zion, *
and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.**
- 20 **Then you will be pleased with the appointed sacrifices,
with burnt-offerings and oblations; *
then shall they offer young bullocks upon your altar.**

Silence is kept.

Most holy and merciful Father: We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.

Celebrant We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven.

People **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

Celebrant We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit.

People **Have mercy on us, Lord.**

Celebrant We confess to you, Lord, all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives,
People **We confess to you, Lord.**

Celebrant Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people,
People **We confess to you, Lord.**

Celebrant Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves,
People **We confess to you, Lord.**

Celebrant Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work,
People **We confess to you, Lord.**

Celebrant Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us,
People **We confess to you, Lord.**

Celebrant Accept our repentance, Lord, for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty,
People **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Celebrant For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us,
People **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Celebrant For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us,
People **Accept our repentance, Lord.**

Celebrant Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
People **Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.**

Celebrant Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
People **That we may show forth your glory in the world.**

Celebrant By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
People **Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.**

The Celebrant facing the people, says

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desires not the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live, has given power and commandment to his ministers to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardons and absolves all those who truly repent, and with sincere hearts believe his holy Gospel. Therefore we beseech him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Peace *Please stand.*

Prayer Book, page 360

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People **And also with you.**

The Ministers and People greet one another in the name of the Lord. After exchanging the Peace, please be seated.

Welcome and Announcements

The Holy Communion

At the Offertory [noon and 7:30 p.m.] Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake *Sung by the choir.* Richard Farrant
Lord, for thy tender mercy's sake, lay not our sins to our charge, but forgive that is past, and give us grace to amend our sinful lives. To decline from sin and incline to virtue, that we may walk in a perfect heart before thee, now and evermore. Amen.

At the Presentation [noon and 7:30 p.m.] *Sung by all, standing.* Gardiner
The fruits of our labor are presented to God, along with gifts for our food ministry.



All things are thine; no gift have we, Lord of all gifts, to offer thee; and hence with grateful hearts to-day thine own before thy feet we lay.

The Great Thanksgiving Eucharistic Prayer A Prayer Book, page 361
The people remain standing.

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.

People **We lift them to the Lord.**

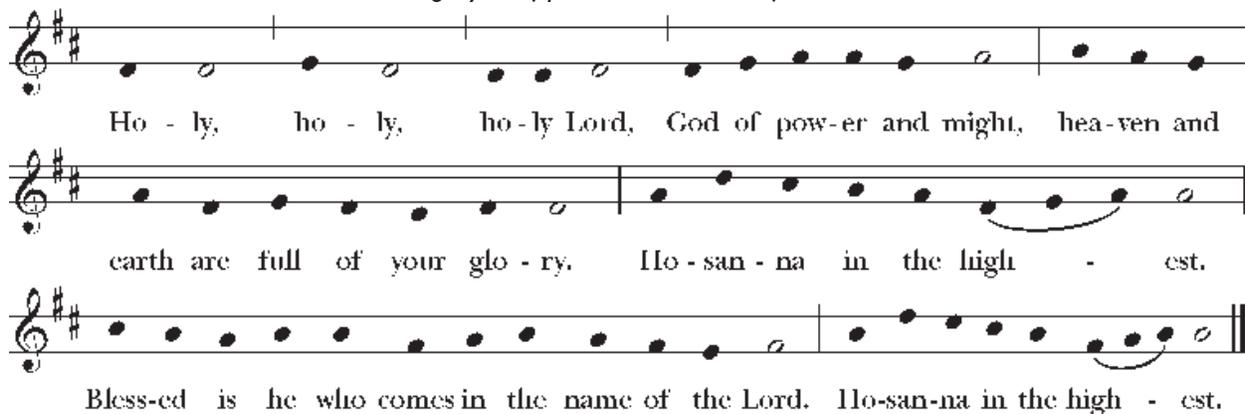
Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Celebrant It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. *Here a proper preface is said.*

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus *Sung by all (spoken at 7:30 a.m.).* David Hurd



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and might, hea - ven and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Please kneel as you are able.

Celebrant

Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made us for yourself; and, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal Son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us, to reconcile us to you, the God and Father of all.

He stretched out his arms upon the cross, and offered himself in obedience to your will, a perfect sacrifice for the whole world.

On the night he was handed over to suffering and death, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Celebrant and People

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Celebrant

We celebrate the memorial of our redemption, O Father, in this sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Recalling his death, resurrection, and ascension, we offer you these gifts.

Sanctify them by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him. Sanctify us also that we may faithfully receive this holy Sacrament, and serve you in unity, constancy, and peace; and at the last day bring us with all your saints into the joy of your eternal kingdom.

All this we ask through your Son Jesus Christ. By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,

Our Father, who art in heaven,

hallowed be thy Name,

thy kingdom come,

thy will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those

who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

and the power, and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

The Celebrant breaks the consecrated bread. A period of silence is kept.

The Hymnal S-161, David Hurd

Sung by all (spoken at 7:30 a.m.).

Lamb of God, you take a - way the sins of the world:
have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sins of the world: have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God,
you take a - way the sins of the world: grant us peace.

Celebrant

The gifts of God for the people of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

At the Communion of the People

All are welcome at the altar in this place. Communion is distributed at the high altar and in either of the side chapels, kneeling or standing (Good Shepherd only at 7:30 a.m.). The altar also extends to your pew if you need us to bring the sacrament to you; just let an usher know. To receive Communion, place your hands together, palms up. You may consume the bread and then drink from the wine in the larger chalice. If you prefer to “intinct” or touch the edge of your bread to the wine, please use one of the smaller cups, available at all stations. Gluten-free wafers are available upon request. If you prefer to receive a blessing, cross your arms against your chest.

Music at Communion [noon and 7:30 p.m.]

Motet Illumination *Sung by the choir.* Michael McGlynn
(Text from the tombstone of James Galway d. 1627, St. Multose Cathedral, Kinsale, Ireland)

*Quisquis eris qui transieris,
Perlege, sta, et plora;
Eram ut es, eris ut sum;
Pro me, precor, ora.* *Translation:* Whoever it is that passes here
Read this, stop, and shed a tear
I was as you are, and you shall be
What I am now. Pray for me.

Hymn 309 O Food to pilgrims given *Sung by all, seated.* *O Welt, ich muss dich lassen*

After Communion, the Celebrant says

Let us pray. *Please kneel.*

All **Almighty and everliving God,** *Prayer Book, page 366*

**we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food
of the most precious Body and Blood
of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ;
and for assuring us in these holy mysteries
that we are living members of the Body of your Son,
and heirs of your eternal kingdom.**

**And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do,
to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.**

**To him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit,
be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.**

A Solemn Prayer

Celebrant Grant, most merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace, that we may be cleansed from all our sins, and serve you with a quiet mind; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Hymn 149 [noon and 7:30 p.m.] Eternal Lord of love *Sung by all, standing.* *Old 124th*

Dismissal *Prayer Book, page 366*

Deacon Let us go forth in the name of Christ.

People **Thanks be to God.**

In order to allow for private prayer following the service, please exit quietly.



Participants | 7:30 A.M. | **CELEBRANT:** The Rev. Judy Webb Davis; **DEACON AND PREACHER:** The Rev. William S. Stanley; **LAY ASSISTANT MINISTER:** Pat Githens

NOON | **CELEBRANT:** The Rev. John D. Rohrs; **DEACON:** The Rev. Judy Webb Davis; **SUBDEACON:** Susan Wilkes; **READERS:** Sarah Bartenstein, Scott Finn; **PREACHER:** The Rev. William S. Stanley; **ASSISTING CLERGY:** The Rev. Cate Anthony, the Rev. John W.A. Jenkins; **CHALICE BEARERS:** Howard Anderson, Charlie Caldwell, Lisa Cuseo-Ott, Mary Martin, Laurie Rogers, Kim Spensieri; **VERGER:** Kathy Brock; **MUSICIANS:** St. Stephen's Choir, Chris Edwards and Robert McCormick, *directors*; Diana Chou and Robert McCormick, *organ*

7:30 P.M. | **CELEBRANT:** The Rev. John W.A. Jenkins; **DEACON:** The Rev. Cate Anthony; **SUBDEACON:** Barbara Massey; **READERS:** Abigail Moore, Josh Rockett; **PREACHER:** The Rev. William S. Stanley; **ASSISTING CLERGY:** The Rev. John D. Rohrs; **CHALICE BEARERS:** Sam Davis, Earl Roney, Kim Spensieri, Anne Townsend; **ACOLYTES:** Wyatt Hobbs, Nina Matos; **VERGER:** Dave Davis; **MUSICIANS:** St. Stephen's Choir, Chris Edwards and Robert McCormick, *directors*; Diana Chou and Robert McCormick, *organ*

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