

# the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, MARCH 29, 2026 | SUNDAY OF THE PASSION: PALM SUNDAY

## Palm Sunday: important things to know

The schedule for today is slightly different from our usual Sunday schedule.

Not only is the earliest service at 7:30 a.m. (instead of the usual 8 a.m.), but for the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services we begin outside at the Three Chopt entrance to the church for the Liturgy of the Palms, after which we process into the church for Holy Eucharist and the Reading of the Passion.

The evening services are at 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m. as usual, with supper at 6:30 p.m.

There is no morning formation on Palm Sunday or Easter Day. Trailheads will meet at 7 p.m. to conclude their Lenten series.

There is no Wonderful Wednesdays supper in Holy Week. More about Holy Week and Easter services can be found in this edition of the **Spirit**, in a brochure at Information Central, and on our website at [ststephensRVA.org/holy-week](http://ststephensRVA.org/holy-week).

## Agape Meal welcomes all ages

MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2 | 5:30 P.M.

On the day before he was arrested, Jesus gathered with his friends for a meal and the proclamation of a new commandment to love one another, demonstrating it by washing the disciples' feet. Remembering that night, we gather to break bread, to pray, and to be washed clean during an "Agape Meal." Agape (ah-GAHP-ay) is the Greek word for the highest form of love; this service is sometimes known as a love-feast. The custom originated in the early church and is a time of holy fellowship for us as it was for the first Christians. All are welcome, and footwashing is not mandatory—so even if you're not sure about that ritual, join us as we gather at the table to draw close to one another and to Jesus. This offering is for everyone and it is also suitable for families with children. Childcare will be available for babies and toddlers. The menu includes tabbouleh, pita bread, hummus, chicken skewers, cucumber yogurt dip, and cookies for dessert. In addition, there will be child-friendly options (pasta with butter and cheese, and fresh fruit).

No registration is needed for this free event.

## Maundy Thursday's overnight vigil

Following the 7:30 p.m. Maundy Thursday service in the church on April 2, an all-night vigil is kept in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit with the reserved sacrament and the vigil candle. The chapel is filled with greenery and flowers to recall the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus prayed in the hours before he was arrested. Participants take turns staying awake with Jesus, praying for one hour. A sign-up sheet is available at Information Central outside the parish office to ensure that at least two people are in the chapel each hour, but if your preferred slot is filled, come anyway. Security is present throughout the night.

## Good Friday at St. Stephen's

FRIDAY, APRIL 3

St. Stephen's Church offers several ways to enter into Good Friday as we remember the crucifixion of our Lord. Morning Prayer takes place at 8:10 a.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, with Communion from the reserved sacrament. The Liturgy for Good Friday begins at noon in the main church. Following that service, you may walk the Stations of the Cross in the church. Fourteen icons are placed throughout the church representing each of the stations, and booklets will be available with prayers and readings for each station. If you wish, you may join others for a guided walk of the stations, or walk them on your own between 2 and 4 p.m. As a special musical offering at 5 p.m., Robert McCormick, St. Stephen's director of music, will play improvised organ meditations on the 14 traditional stations. Before each improvisation, parishioners will read sonnets based on each station, written by British Anglican priest and poet Malcolm Guite.

Two important notes: child care is not available on Good Friday, and the parish office closes at noon that day.

## 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.





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## Trailheads series concludes with focus on Holy Week

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. Tonight the Rev. John Jenkins will discuss the experiential aspects of Holy Week services which proclaim the heart of Christian hope and life in God's acts to reconcile and heal all of creation. All are welcome and all are encouraged to bring a question or observation about any service or aspect of Holy Week.

When Trailheads resumes after Easter, we'll begin a three-part series on the labyrinth.

## The Great Vigil and First Eucharist of Easter

SATURDAY, APRIL 4 | 7:30 P.M.

“On this most holy night, in which our Lord Jesus passed over from death to life, the Church invites her members, dispersed throughout the world, to gather in vigil and prayer. For this is the Passover of the Lord, in which, by hearing his Word and celebrating his Sacraments, we share in his victory over death.” With these stirring words, we begin the Great Vigil of Easter at dusk on Holy Saturday. We gather outdoors (weather permitting) at the Three Chopt Road entrance to the church to light the paschal candle. After processing into the church, we sit in near-darkness lit only by candles as we hear the Scriptures. Eventually the lights come on, we ring bells, and the organ and choir begin as we joyfully proclaim the resurrection of our Lord. A homily follows, then the celebration of the First Eucharist of Easter. This is one of the most dramatic and moving liturgies of the church year. Please join us! (If you can't, you can watch the indoor portion on livestream.) Child care is not available during this service.

## Easter Day at St. Stephen's

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

Services, receptions and more for next Sunday are listed below. The church will be full for many of these services, and additional seating will be available in the fellowship hall with a video feed; those in the fellowship hall will be ushered into the church to receive Communion. During the 11:15 a.m. service, additional seating will also be available in Palmer Hall, where there is a soft space for children who need more room to move.

Please remember that seat saving is not permitted, and while we want you to arrive early with your entire group so that you can sit together, ushers will let you know when you may enter if the previous service is not over when you arrive.

As indicated by asterisks, child care is available in our nursery on the lower floor during the 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. services.

Parking will be available in our parking lot, on the street, and at St. Catherine's School across the street, though carpooling is still a good idea. Remember not to block our neighbors' driveways.

If you would like more information about a particular service, visit the “This Sunday” page of our website for a PDF copy of the Easter services booklet, [ststephensRVA.org/this-Sunday](http://ststephensRVA.org/this-Sunday).

All services held in the church will be livestreamed on the “This Sunday” page.

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One with Hymns

9 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two (two services: one in Palmer Hall, one in the church\*), followed by reception

*St. Stephen's Choir with brass, timpani, organ*

*After the 9 a.m. services, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt for children. We will wait to begin the hunt until both 9 a.m. services have concluded.*

*There is no Sunday Forum or other formation on Easter Day.*

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11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two\*, followed by reception  
*St. Stephen's Choir with brass, timpani, organ*

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

6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper

8 p.m., Compline *Sanctuary, the Compline Choir*

## Help with St. Stephen's Easter egg hunt

SUNDAY, APRIL 5

St. Stephen's Church will host an Easter egg hunt on Easter Day following the 9 a.m. services in Palmer Hall and the main church. We will begin the hunt after both services have concluded.

**Can you help hide eggs on Easter morning** between 9 and 10 a.m.? This is an opportunity for youth and adult helpers. Volunteers will meet in the Palmer Hall annex at 9 a.m. Use the QR code to volunteer.



## Unpacking the Eucharist

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15 | 6:30 P.M.

Have you wanted to learn more about the meaning of our weekly Sunday services? Have you ever wondered why we do certain things at certain points in the liturgy? All are invited to an instructed Eucharist in the main church where you can experience a full celebration of Holy Communion with pauses for teaching and learning. You'll come away with a deeper appreciation of our liturgical life and Sunday services will never be the same! Feel free to come to the Wonderful Wednesday night supper before and then join us. RSVP by scanning the QR code.



## Orientation for visitors and newcomers

SUNDAY, APRIL 12 | 10:10 A.M.-11 A.M.

To welcome and support those newer to or exploring St. Stephen's Church, we host orientation sessions every other month in the Café @ St. Stephen's. We share information about the community, our values and culture, and ways to get connected, serve or learn. We also respond to your questions. To let us know you'll be there, scan the QR code. The sessions are hosted by Jennifer Bousquet, director of outreach and engagement, and the Rev. John Jenkins. You are always welcome to email Jennifer ([jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org](mailto:jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org)) or John ([jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org](mailto:jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org)) or call 804.288.2867.



## A reception for newcomers and visitors

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

The rector, staff and hospitality committee of St. Stephen's host periodic receptions for those who are new (or new-ish) to this community of faith. If you've recently joined St. Stephen's, or you have been away for a season, or you have not yet decided whether to make this your church home, please come to the next reception. RSVP: [ststephensRVA.org/newcomer](http://ststephensRVA.org/newcomer).

## Let us know if you plan to be confirmed, received, or reaffirmed

BISHOP'S VISIT: MAY 17 | DEADLINE: APRIL 16

We are delighted that Bishop Mark Bourlakas will visit St. Stephen's on Sunday, May 17. During the bishop's visit each year you are invited to participate in the Rites of Confirmation for youth and adults, Reception of those from another tradition, and Reaffirmation of baptismal vows for those who wish it. A more detailed description of these rites is available on our website, [ststephensRVA.org/confirmation](http://ststephensRVA.org/confirmation).

If you are an adult interested in being confirmed, received, or reaffirmed in the Episcopal Church on May 17, or you are a young person participating in Confirmation preparation, please complete and submit a candidate registration form. There are two forms: one for adults, one for youth. Both are linked on the confirmation page of our website.

## Coming in the Sunday Forum

SUNDAYS, APRIL 12, 19, AND 26 | 10:10 A.M.

When the Sunday Forum resumes on April 12, our presenters are Kirk Gibson, director of development for Shrine Mont, the diocesan camp and conference center, and Mary Beth Abplanalp, former interim director of Shrine Mont camps. Kirk and Mary Beth will share highlights of life at Shrine Mont, including summer camps and a capital campaign to which St. Stephen's has contributed.

On April 19, our guest will be Dr. Westina Matthews, who will also preach at the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services that day. Dr. Matthews is a highly-sought speaker, teacher, author, and spiritual director who will speak with the Rev. John Jenkins about contemplative practice in contemporary life.

On April 26, as we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, we will put our national texts in conversation with our sacred texts. This will include a panel discussion of the "second founding" and Reconstruction after the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

## Contemplative living for contemporary life

SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 12:30-4:30 P.M.

Dr. Westina Matthews will lead a half-day retreat exploring contemplative living in the context of contemporary life. In a noisy world and anxious time, how are we to live faithfully, now? This retreat, which begins in Palmer Hall, will feature holy listening and discernment that nourishes body, mind, and heart through prayer, reflection, laughter, movement and music. The retreat is crafted for St. Stephen's and led by Dr. Matthews, a highly-sought speaker, teacher, author, and spiritual director. Come and rest in peace, be awakened in joy, and listen for the simple presence of God in our midst. This retreat was originally scheduled in February and postponed due to inclement weather. If you signed up for it earlier, you do not need to do so again. If not, please scan the QR code to register.





## Shrine Mont news

JUNE 26-28 | SIGN UP BY APRIL 22

Parishioners of all ages are invited to a weekend of relaxation, beauty, and fellowship at Shrine Mont this summer, June 26-28. This is the time of our traditional parish retreat, though it will be a more relaxed weekend this year without a formal program or structure. Many regular members of our planning team are not able to help or attend this year, so we decided to conserve our staff resources and put that energy into a year of recalibration as we consider the best format and timing for future St. Stephen's retreats at Shrine Mont, a place that remains near and dear to our hearts. Fortunately, Shrine Mont welcomes our sending parishioners for a more relaxed, self-organized, and fellowship-based weekend, which will still feature many of the elements that we have come to love—pool time and pickleball, bonfires and butt buns, morning hikes and nighttime prayers. Scan the QR code or visit [ststephensRVA.org/shrine-mont](http://ststephensRVA.org/shrine-mont) to learn more and register.



## Bible study to focus on lesser-known epistles

THURSDAYS AT 10 A.M. BEGINNING APRIL 9

After a short hiatus, our Thursday morning Bible Study will return April 9. This spring we will study the New Testament epistles. The word epistle means "letter," and in the New Testament there are 11 short epistles that often don't get our attention, including 1 and 2 Timothy, James, Philemon, and others. These short texts tend not to be read in church, or privately, and are not as well known as Paul's epistles or the Epistle to the Hebrews. In this six-week study, we'll explore these letters and sermons for what they can show us about their authors and audiences, and how we can learn from them today. No registration is needed for this offering; we meet in Room 14.

## Women of St. Stephen's program: 'Meditations on Eastertide'

TUESDAY, APRIL 7 | GATHER, 9:30 A.M. | PROGRAM, 10 A.M.

Angier Brock, who spoke here in 2024, will return the Tuesday in Easter Week to present "Meditations on Eastertide." The 50-day feast known as Eastertide takes us from Easter Day until the Day of Pentecost. Angier, who is retired after more than 30 years of teaching, is a communicant of Grace Episcopal Church in Yorktown, where she serves as an Education for Ministry mentor and centering prayer facilitator. Over two dozen of her hymn and anthem texts, set to music by various British and American composers, have been sung at worship services and concerts in the U.S. and abroad. She has a master of arts in Christian education and master of fine arts in creative writing. We'll be in the fellowship hall, and no registration is required.

## Spring cleaning?

SATURDAY, APRIL 18 | 9 A.M. - 2 P.M.

Are you spring cleaning? On April 18 we will partner with Caritas here at St. Stephen's, receiving household goods and furniture in good condition for their furniture bank. The furniture bank provides essential household items to individuals and families transitioning from homelessness or crisis situations. Their truck will be parked near the playground at St. Stephen's. A list of items accepted can be found at [ststephensRVA.org/outreach](http://ststephensRVA.org/outreach). Please note that furniture and other items must be in good condition; if Caritas is not able to accept your item(s), please be prepared to take them with you. St. Stephen's will not be able to accept or dispose of them. Also, we cannot accept any items before 9 a.m. on April 18, or after 2 p.m.



**St. Stephen's**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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