

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2026 | THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

Orientation for visitors and newcomers this morning

THIS MORNING | 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, and we are holding one today! We will share information about the community, our values and culture, and ways to get connected, serve, or learn. We will also respond to your questions. Hosts are Jennifer Bousquet, director of outreach and engagement, and the Rev. John Jenkins, associate rector.

Sunday Forum speakers today and next Sunday

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

The Sunday Forum and other formation resumes today. In today's forum our presenters are Kirk Gibson, director of development for Shrine Mont, our 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.

Next Sunday, 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. Dr. Matthews will lead a half-day workshop here this Saturday, as well (details below).

Contemplative living for contemporary life

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



This Saturday, 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 January 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.

Unpacking the Eucharist this Wednesday



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 **this Wednesday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m.**, where we'll have 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! Why not come to the Wonderful Wednesday supper (5:45-6:30 p.m.), then join us? RSVP using the QR code.

Newcomers and visitors, this reception is for you!

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 to this community of faith. If you've recently joined St. Stephen's, or you've been away for a season, or you have not yet decided whether to make this your church home, please come to the next event. RSVP: ststephensRVA.org/newcomer.

Thank you to St. Stephen's pastoral care ministry for hosting today's reception following the 11:15 a.m. service.

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.





Beginning this evening in Trailheads: the labyrinth, a sacred path

SUNDAYS THROUGH APRIL 26; 7-7:50 PM

Maybe you have heard of or seen a labyrinth. What do you know about walking a labyrinth as a spiritual practice of prayer? St. Stephen's labyrinth guild begins a three-part series in Trailheads this evening to introduce this ancient form of prayerful movement and meditation. In the first two sessions in the Café @ St. Stephen's, we will discuss the history and meaning of labyrinths and explore the many ways that walking can become a powerful tool for reflection, introspection, prayer, and renewal. The final session will include the opportunity to walk the labyrinth and reflect with others about the experience.

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 to register.



Roof repairs taking place this week

Beginning Tuesday and lasting through Friday, repairs to the flat roof on the parish house will take place. This may mean intermittent noise throughout each day in various rooms and on the grounds nearby. We are sorry for this inconvenience and appreciate your understanding and patience.

Bible study focuses on lesser-known epistles

THURSDAYS AT 10 A.M.

The Thursday morning Bible Study returned last Thursday, but if you missed the first session in the spring series, you can still join our study of 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 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.

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

DEADLINE: THIS THURSDAY, APRIL 16 | BISHOP'S VISIT: MAY 17

We are delighted that Bishop Mark Bourlakas will visit St. Stephen's on Sunday, May 17. During the bishop's visit each year, adults and youth participate in the Rites of Confirmation, 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. Both adults and youth who plan to be confirmed, received, or reaffirmed on May 17, please complete and submit a candidate registration form right away. There are separate forms for adults and youth, both linked on the confirmation page of our website.

Youth movie night, senior events, Busch Gardens

Next Sunday our youth groups (grades 6 through 12) will have a movie night from 6 to 8 p.m. in the small fellowship hall. We'll start with dinner, then watch a movie and eat popcorn and other theater snacks. Scan the QR code to RSVP so we'll have enough food.



Also coming up are two special events for graduating high school seniors on May 3, and a trip to Busch Gardens for grades 6-12 on May 9. Visit ststephensRVA.org/youth for details and registration for all these special offerings. (Space for the Busch Gardens trip is limited!)

Spring cleaning?

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

Are you spring cleaning? This Saturday 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 at St. Stephen's to receive your donations. A list of items accepted can be found at 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, nor after 2 p.m.

Family ministry outreach activity

SUNDAY, APRIL 19 | 10:10 A.M.

In conjunction with our furniture drive for Caritas, during the formation hour next Sunday, families will gather to assemble bag lunches for Caritas. Youth, children, and parents are all invited to participate. Please note that this is an intergenerational activity, not a "drop-off" event. Parents will need to remain to help their children with this activity which has several steps. Youth will prepare sandwiches and children will assemble lunch bags with other components, as well as writing notes of encouragement to go into the bag lunches. We hope to package 70 meals, so many hands are needed. No registration is required; simply come to Room 14 to get started.

Wednesday series explores end-of-life issues

APRIL 22, 29, AND MAY 3 | 6:30 P.M.

A week from Wednesday, we'll begin a three-part evening series exploring end-of-life issues. This series is open to all and will take place in Palmer Hall. The April 22 session is "**Discerning what is important: Approaches to end-of-life decision making.**" The Rev. Cate Anthony will lead the first session with the Rev. Faith Fitzgerald, Director of Pastoral Care at Westminster-Canterbury Richmond. Using the Five Wishes advanced care planning model, Cate and Faith will think about the many dimensions of end-of-life decision making. Five Wishes is the first advance care plan addressing personal, emotional, and spiritual wishes, in addition to medical treatment. It's called the "living will with heart and soul." Join this important conversation.

Lunch and learn about hospitality ministries

APRIL 26, 12:30-1:30 P.M.

St. Stephen's hospitality ministry invites you to participate in a "come and see" luncheon to learn the various ways and times you can share the love of Christ in simple, meaningful ministries of welcome and hospitality. See what's possible now or in your future with our hospitality ministries. Scan the QR code to sign up. Questions: the Rev. John Jenkins, jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org; Jennifer Bousquet, jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org.



Rebuilding Together Richmond

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

Roll up your sleeves and put on your safety glasses! On April 25, teams across Richmond will assist homeowners in need with small maintenance and repairs to their yards and homes. We're recruiting parishioners ages 14 and up to help paint, trim bushes or lay mulch, mend fences, do light carpentry, and other tasks. The sign-up and waivers are at ststephensRVA.org/outreach.

Ham Cemetery clean-up morning

SATURDAY, MAY 2 | 9:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

Make plans to join others from St. Stephen's Church for a spring clean-up of the Sons and Daughters of Ham Cemetery. After the Civil War, it was customary for emancipated slaves to form fraternal societies to allow them to meet socially, as well as to provide a proper site for the burial of their families. Traditionally white cemeteries had no section for these interments. The Sons and Daughters of Ham Cemetery, located near St. Stephen's, is one such site.

St. Stephen's parishioners assist in tending to this final resting place for emancipated slaves who once worked on the land now occupied by this church, the University of Richmond, Bandy Field, and other familiar places. Learn more and sign up at ststephensRVA.org/outreach.

Shalom Farms volunteer day

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 | 9 A.M.-NOON

Join us for a work party at Shalom Farms! We will spend the morning working at their northside farm. Possible tasks are transplanting crops, cleaning tools, spreading mulch, weeding, and harvesting. All ages are welcome. Please bring a water bottle and wear close-toed shoes and clothes you don't mind getting dirty. Sign up and details are at ststephensRVA.org/outreach.

Spring Ministry Night

THURSDAY, MAY 7 | 5:15-7:30 P.M.

A few times each year, standing committees of the vestry gather for supper, fellowship, and sharing about what is happening at St. Stephen's Church. The gathering time concludes with a brief worship service, then individual committees meet to discuss upcoming plans for their area of ministry. Everyone is welcome at Ministry Night, whether you are on a committee or not. Learn about various ministries and how you might plug in. RSVP so we'll know how much supper to prepare: ststephensRVA.org/ministry-night.



Final Sunday Forum series considers our founding documents

SUNDAYS, APRIL 26, MAY 3 AND 10 | 10:10 A.M.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the Sunday Forum will present a three-part series reflecting on the powerful yet problematic legacy of our nation's founding documents, and how they relate to the values of Christian faith and Scripture.

April 26 | *We Hold These Truths: The intertwined legacies of American and Christian ideals*

The Rev. Dr. William L. Sachs, our historian-in-residence, and parishioner Henry (Hank) L. Chambers, Jr., a constitutional scholar and law professor at the University of Richmond, will reflect on our founding documents and sacred texts in conversation, and on how both are critiqued by the lived experience of the many Americans whose human rights were long denied in this land.

May 3 | *A Changing Constitution for a Changing Country: Postbellum America and the 'Second Founding'*

Building on the first session, this forum will focus on the profound changes in the United States and in the church in the middle and latter part of the 19th century. The Rev. Cate Anthony will be joined by Hank Chambers and Elvatrice Belsches, who will consider the passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments and the era of Reconstruction that followed, as well as concurrent movements for women's liberation. These dramatic changes again intertwined with a changing church, as sacred texts were re-evaluated and new interpretations explored.

Elvatrice Belsches is a Richmond area native and resident who specializes in chronicling the African American experience in history. She is the author of *Black America Series: Richmond, Virginia* (Arcadia Publishing) and eight biographical entries for the African American National Biography (Oxford University Press). Belsches was also honored to serve as the in-studio art department researcher on Steven Spielberg's motion picture, "Lincoln."

May 10 | *Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Living these ideals in faith*

In the final session of this series—and the final Sunday Forum of the 2025-26 program year—join the clergy of St. Stephen's Church as they consider the role and place of the church today in conversation with the powerful ideals and flawed history of our country's most formative documents. What does it mean for us today to proclaim and strive to uphold the promise of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? Parishioners will have a chance to reflect and share their own experiences in table conversations.

A poetry night in Trailheads

SUNDAY, MAY 3 | 7-7:50 P.M.



Poetry touches our inmost truths, expresses mysteries of human existence, and opens us to as yet unseen possibilities. Contemporary poets and their art have long been honored at St. Stephen's Church and incorporated into worship, especially in the evening, alongside the poetry of hymnody and liturgy. As such, we invite you to participate in our first poetry reading event, held in the Great Fifty Days of Easter. The theme of the evening is resurrection. All are welcome to attend. To offer a reading, learn more and register by scanning the QR code. Questions? Contact the Rev. John Jenkins, jjenkins@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