

# the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026 | THE FIFTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

## Forum series on our founding documents continues

SUNDAYS THROUGH MAY 10 | 10:10 A.M.

As we approach the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the Sunday Forum is presenting a 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. Today's presentation is "A Changing Constitution for a Changing Country: Postbellum America and the 'Second Founding.'" Building on the first session, we will focus on the profound changes in the United States and in the church in the middle and later part of the 19th century. Hank Chambers and Elvatrice Belsches will join the Rev. Cate Anthony to 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." Parishioner Hank Chambers, a constitutional scholar and law professor at the University of Richmond, was one of our speakers last Sunday and returns for this conversation.

## This Wednesday: aging with dignity

WEDNESDAYS THROUGH MAY 6 | 6:30 P.M.

Our Wednesday evening series in Palmer Hall is exploring aging and issues around the end of life. This week, the final session will focus on estate planning. Join Newnie Rogers of Virginia Estate and Trust Law for a presentation and conversation. Newnie, a member of St. James's Episcopal Church, presented here last year and was so well-received that we've invited her back. No sign-up is required for this series and all are welcome.

## Honoring our high school seniors today

During the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services in the main church today, we will honor our graduating seniors, giving them a blessing and a gift from the congregation. This is a beautiful moment of recognition, blessing, and gratitude for them at this threshold moment in their lives. Between the two services, seniors and their families are invited to gather in the café for a celebration. There will be treats, fellowship, and time to reflect on this milestone.

## Choral Evensong for Ascension Day

THURSDAY, MAY 14 | 6 P.M.

Thursday, May 14, is Ascension Day, forty days after Easter, the day we celebrate Jesus' return to God's right hand. The St. Stephen's Choir will sing a special service of Choral Evensong that day at 6 p.m. Choral Evensong is a beloved jewel of the Anglican tradition, and this service will include music by Margaret Burk, Herbert Brewer, and Gerald Finzi. Please join us.

## A poetry night in Trailheads this evening

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 tonight. The theme of the evening is **resurrection**. All are welcome to attend.

## 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.





## Spring Ministry Night is this Thursday, May 7

A few times during the year, members of various standing committees of the vestry gather at 5:15 p.m. for supper, fellowship, and sharing about what is happening at St. Stephen's Church. This gathering time concludes with a simple worship service, after which individual committees may meet to discuss upcoming plans for their area of ministry. **Everyone is welcome at Ministry Night, whether you are on one of the committees or not.** This is a great way to learn about the various ministries happening here, and how and where you might plug in. If you plan to attend, please let us know so we'll know how much supper to prepare. Visit [ststephensRVA.org/ministry-night](http://ststephensRVA.org/ministry-night).

## Farmers market has shifted to 8 a.m. opening

SATURDAYS | 8 A.M.-NOON

Last Saturday our farmers market shifted to the spring-summer opening time (May through September) of 8 a.m. Our rain-or-shine market is open year-round, selling local produce, flowers, and plants; bread, eggs, meat, poultry, seafood; and prepared foods.

## Come to the young adults monthly dinner

THURSDAY, MAY 14 | 6:30 P.M.

Young adults of St. Stephen's Church and their friends gather on the second Thursday of the month for dinner and fellowship at local restaurants. The May gathering is at the Continental on Grove, just down the street from St. Stephen's. Sign up by scanning the QR code so the planners can reserve enough tables.



## Bishop Bourlakas visits two weeks from today

SUNDAY, MAY 17

The Rt. Rev. Mark Bourlakas, our assistant bishop, will visit St. Stephen's Church to confirm more than 60 youth and adults, and baptize five adults. Bishop Bourlakas will also preach and celebrate the Holy Eucharist at our 9 and 11:15 a.m. services in the main church. Please come to support the confirmands and welcome Bishop Bourlakas, who is visiting us for the first time. Festive receptions will follow each service. Note: There is no morning formation on May 17.

## 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](http://ststephensRVA.org/outreach).

## Please take part in a parish-wide survey

DEADLINE: MAY 7

As part of a parish-wide discernment process, family ministry leaders have been gathering input from people of all ages through focus groups and "All Call" sessions. The last phase is a survey, and we want to hear from you regardless of whether you have children or youth in your household. There are three surveys: an "adult" survey; a "youth" survey (grades 6 through 12); and a "child" survey (ages 10 through grade 5). Visit [ststephensRVA.org/children-youth](http://ststephensRVA.org/children-youth) or scan a QR code below.



Adult



Youth



Child

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## Outreach ministry appreciation brunch

TUESDAY, MAY 19 | 9:30-11 A.M.

Please join Jennifer Bousquet and Anna Jones in the fellowship hall for a lovely brunch to show our appreciation and gratitude to everyone involved in outreach ministry in the past year. Brenda Burgner, LCSW, will give an interactive presentation on de-escalation and trauma-informed communication. Brenda will teach us practical skills to calmly navigate moments of conflict. These skills can be put to use while you are serving the community, at home with your family, or anywhere else. RSVP by scanning the QR code.



## Final Women of St. Stephen's 2025-26 program

TUESDAY, MAY 12 | 10 A.M.

Join the Women of St. Stephen's for their final gathering of the 2025-26 program year at the Bishop's Chapel at Roslyn (8727 River Road) for Holy Eucharist. The Rev. Judy Webb Davis will be the celebrant. A light luncheon will follow in Roslyn's beautiful natural setting. All are welcome and there is no fee or registration.

## Summer will be here soon

Here are some dates and other details to know as we approach summer.

May 17 will be the last day for our **regular worship schedule**. Beginning May 24 (Memorial Day weekend), we move to our summer worship schedule, **8 a.m., 10 a.m., and 5:30 p.m.**

**Compline** takes place Sundays at 8 p.m. through the end of May, then takes a break in June and July, resuming in August.

**Childcare** will be available for the 10 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. services.

**There is no Sunday formation** during the summer.

**The Sunday Community Supper** continues throughout the summer, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**The Wonderful Wednesday supper** takes a summer break **after** May 13.

**The farmers market** continues on Saturdays all summer, 8 a.m. until noon.

**Summer hours for the May Fair House** are 9 a.m. to noon on Saturdays only. After Friday, May 22, the shop is closed on Sundays and weekdays until September.

**Morning Prayer** continues weekdays at 8:10 a.m. in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit unless the church is closed for a holiday.

**The Café @ St. Stephen's** is open except holidays.

**Holidays:** St. Stephen's observes Memorial Day (May 25), Juneteenth (June 19), and Independence Day as holidays. Since July 4 is a Saturday, we will close on Friday, July 3.

**The office closes at noon on Fridays** beginning May 29.

## Cate Anthony to be on sabbatical this summer

In 2024, the vestry of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church approved a sabbatical policy for our clergy. In the Diocese of Virginia, it is standard practice for the bishop's office to include sabbatical planning in letters of agreement for clergy. In fact, this is required for rectors and strongly encouraged for associates. Diocesan guidelines anticipate sabbatical leaves every five to seven years. Under St. Stephen's policy, we stagger those leave times so that only one clergy member is on sabbatical at a given time. Likewise, sabbaticals are taken only during the summer months, when the pace of parish life slows somewhat.

Our first experience with this new policy came in 2025, when the Rev. Will Stanley was "off duty" from June 1 to September 1. The Rev. Cate Anthony will be on sabbatical during the same time frame this summer. Cate's sabbatical plans include walking St. Cuthbert's Way in Scotland; she will also travel in northern England.

While many professions do not enjoy this type of sabbatical benefit, our leaders support and encourage clergy to recharge their batteries and renew their own spirits so that they can continue to care for others from a deep well of faith and health. Since sabbaticals are common church-wide, having this policy in place will help us retain and attract talented clergy.

## The 'soft space' moves for the summer

Beginning Memorial Day weekend, the "soft space" that is available in Palmer Hall during the program year will move to the main church, since the Palmer Hall service does not take place in the summer. Three or four pews are removed from the Chapel of the Good Shepherd to make room for the soft space, and are re-installed after Labor Day. The soft space provides floor cushions, chairs, and books for young children who attend services with their families but need a bit of space to move around. Children in the soft space must be accompanied by a parent or other adult.

## A friendly reminder to wear a nametag

At St. Stephen's Church we like to be able to call one another by name. Since we are always welcoming new people, it's helpful if we wear nametags. If you don't have a St. Stephen's nametag (or you've misplaced yours), please request one at the table near the nametags. Temporary sticky-back tags are available for you to use in the meantime.

## Make your info accessible to fellow parishioners

When we launched the online portal for our membership database last year, each person's record was set to "opt out" of sharing information through the online parish directory. If you wish for parishioners to be able to find you in the directory, log on and make your details accessible by changing this default. You can tailor your profile to make some things visible and others private. Instructions are at [ststephensRVA.org/ministry-platform](https://ststephensRVA.org/ministry-platform). This password-protected directory is not available to the public.



## Calendar of summer family ministry events

Our family ministry team has planned several events for children, youth, and parents this summer. Many do not require registration or sign-up, but for those that do, links will be provided soon!

**Sunday, 6/7** | Rising middle school students will go to Gelati Celesti together after the 10 a.m. service. Meet Caroline Harris at church at 11:15 a.m.

**Sunday, 6/14** | Popsicles after Baptism: Following the 10 a.m. service, hang out on the playground and enjoy a popsicle! (For families—it's not a "drop off" event.)

**Wednesday, 6/17** | Playground Hang, 9-10 a.m. for preschoolers and parents together; siblings are welcome.



## July

**Saturday, 7/11** | Shalom Farms workday from 9 a.m. until noon. Ages 4 and up with parents attending; rising 6th-12th graders may attend without parents. Registration will be required.

**Wednesday, 7/15** | Playground Hang, 9-10 a.m. for preschoolers and parents together; siblings are welcome.

**Sunday, 7/19** | Popsicles after Baptism: Following the 10 a.m. service, hang out on the playground and enjoy a popsicle! (For families—it's not a "drop off" event.)

**Sunday, 7/27** | Rising high school students will go to Gelati Celesti together after the 10 a.m. service. Meet Caroline Harris at church at 11:15 a.m.



## August

**Wednesday, 8/5** | Playground Hang, 9-10 a.m. for preschoolers and parents together; siblings are welcome.

**Sunday, 8/9** | Cedarfield retirement community visit (elementary school children with their parents, and middle and high school youth). Social time and games with St. Stephen's parishioners living at Cedarfield, 2-3:30 p.m. Registration will be required.

**Sunday, 8/16** | Social for parents of rising 6th-12th graders, 4-6 p.m. Invitation with RSVP to follow.

**Sunday, 8/23** | Popsicles after Baptism: Following the 10 a.m. service, hang out on the playground and enjoy a popsicle! (For families—it's not a "drop off" event.)



## How to find Information Central

Information Central is just outside the parish office, across from Palmer Hall, with a video screen, a large table with printed information, and literature holders on the walls. Weekly communications often direct you there for brochures, prayer lists, or other items.



Thank you to the Women of St. Stephen's for hosting today's reception following the 11:15 a.m. service. This group offers programs for the entire parish, engages in outreach, awards grants, manages the May Fair House, and provides important opportunities for fellowship and formation.



**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](http://ststephensRVA.org)