

Standing Committees and Ministry Nights: An Overview

Updated February 2026

Introduction

In a church the size of St. Stephen's, it is critical to build good systems of communication and collaboration between the vestry, staff, and broader congregation. One key way to do this is through the formation of standing committees, comprised of staff members, vestry liaisons, and at-large parishioners. A number of standing committees at St. Stephen's are well established and have a long history of operation; others have been out of commission and have needed to be reimagined. Still others are new and address areas of need.

In each case, the goal is for the committees not only to share the planning and strategy in a given ministry area, but also to aid the staff in hands on ministry and coordination. We are a big enough ship to need all hands on deck, so these are both advisory and working committees. More broadly, these committees provide a means of awareness and engagement, shared creativity and leadership. This structure of shared staff/parishioner leadership helps ensure transparency in decision-making, sustainability in the face of staff transitions, attention to good processes and procedures, and a broad base for generative ideas and ministry implementation.

Here is the full list of committees and purpose statements, with vestry and staff liaisons listed (each committee also has a number of at-large members who are not listed below). Committee chairs may want to copy and paste your committee's purpose statement at the top of your printed meeting agendas, to keep the purpose and mission top of mind.

Standing Committees for 2025-2026 (reshuffling in February 2026)

Adult Formation

Purpose	Works with staff leaders to develop adult formation offerings, focusing on the Sunday Forum, other Sunday morning classes, Sunday evening offerings, weekday classes, and small groups. May also support the planning and implementation of seasonal retreats, occasional trips or pilgrimages, and other programs.
Chair:	Hank Chambers
Staff:	Cate Anthony and Bill Sachs
Vestry:	Bill Davis, Gayle Royals
Schedule:	Meets bi-monthly or quarterly

Building and Grounds

Purpose Works with staff leaders, vendors, and key parish volunteers to monitor immediate and long-term capital needs and ongoing maintenance of the physical plant and surrounding grounds.

Chair: Jim Snowa

Staff: David Ellis, Kathleen Wilson-Kennedy

Vestry: James Driscoll, Chip Jamerson, Brandon Spalding

Schedule: Meets monthly

Family Ministry

Purpose Works with staff leaders and formation/worship liaisons to support the children's and youth ministries of the church, including planning and implementing special events, Sunday School and youth group offerings, children's worship participation, and more.

Chairs: Katherine Farley, Greta Kidd, Brandy Singleton

Staff: Cate Anthony, Caroline Harris, Abby Kocher

Vestry: Katherine Farley, Greta Kidd

Schedule: Meets monthly

Finance

Purpose Works with staff leaders, financial professionals, and key parish volunteers to monitor monthly income and expenses, draft an annual budget, and make recommendations to the Vestry to ensure the sound financial health of the parish.

Treasurer: Randy Seibert

Asst. Treas. Jay Moore

Staff: Susan McNamara, John Rohrs, Will Stanley, Kathleen Wilson-Kennedy

Vestry: Wortie Ferrell, Jay Moore, Randy Seibert

Schedule: Meets monthly

Front Porch Ministries

Purpose Works with staff leaders, at-large members, and representatives from the Farmer's Market, Café, May Fair House, art ministries, and Dogwood Preschool to ensure good oversight, collaborative strategies and resource-sharing (in areas of marketing, accounting, event planning, etc.), and creative support of these key public-facing auxiliary ministries.

Chairs: Laura Wilkinson and Robin Raver

Staff: Sarah Bartenstein, Anna Jones, Robin Raver

Vestry: Bill Davis and Joan Putney

Schedule: Meets bi-monthly or quarterly

Hospitality

Purpose Works with staff leaders and key parish volunteers to foster a culture of hospitality and inclusion that helps visitors and newcomers feel welcome and at home. Also helps support strategies for connection and integration that bring those newcomers more deeply into the life of St. Stephen's.

Chair: Mary Virginia Scott

Staff: Jennifer Bousquet, John Jenkins

Vestry: Darrell Headrick and Elizabeth Peay

Schedule: Meets bi-monthly or quarterly

Outreach

Purpose Works with staff leaders, community organizations, and key volunteers to facilitate parishioner involvement in outreach ministries in Richmond and beyond. There is also a separate but connected grants committee that administers grants, with vestry oversight and approval.

Chair: Donnan O'Keefe

Staff: Kitty Ball, Jennifer Bousquet, and Anna Jones

Vestry: Molly Anderson and Darrell Headrick

Schedule: Meets monthly

Parish Life (new committee to be developed in 2026)

Purpose Works with staff leaders, at-large members, vestry liaisons, and ministry representatives to facilitate and/or support key fellowship events in the seasonal life of the church. Examples include Sunday coffee hour receptions, Rally Sunday events, ministry fairs, Women of St. Stephen's fellowship events, the Shrove Tuesday supper, parish picnics, and Shrine Mont retreats.

TBD

Staff: TBD

Vestry: Meg Eckman and Joan Putney

Schedule: TBD

Pastoral Care

Purpose Works with staff leaders and pastoral ministry liaisons (representing Pastoral Visitors, Lay Eucharistic Visitors, Gracious

Gourmet, etc.) to facilitate the on-going congregational care of members who are recovering from surgery, navigating an illness or loss, homebound, or facing other challenges. Also serves as a liaison to outside groups focused on health/wellness.

Chair: Nan O’Connell
Staff: Judy Davis, Mary Feldman
Vestry: Nan O’Connell and Katie Webb
Schedule: Meets bi-monthly or quarterly

Stewardship

Purpose Works with staff leaders and key parish volunteers to foster a culture of sustainable giving for the mission of the church. This includes facilitating the annual giving campaign, supporting the Legacy Society, and other year-round stewardship efforts.

Chairs: Marty Easton and Debbie Dunlap
Staff: Susan McNamara, John Rohrs, Will Stanley, Kathleen Wilson-Kennedy
Vestry: Andrew Robertson
Schedule: Meets monthly in the fall, bimonthly rest of year

Please note: Vestry Liaisons are separately appointed to the Board of Dogwood Preschool and to the St. Stephen’s Endowment Committee. Members of the Executive Committee serve as the core constituency of the Personnel Committee.

Dogwood Board Vestry Liaisons: Katherine Farley and John Rohrs
Endowment Committee Vestry Liaison: Randy Seibert

Detailed Descriptions of Newer Committees

The Front Porch Ministries Committee is designed to foster communication and collaboration among our various outward-facing “retail” ministries, particularly the Farmer’s Market, the Café, and May Fair House, but also extending to Dogwood Preschool, art shows, and more. The goal is to look for areas of synergy and cooperation, such as shared publicity and marketing, and coordinated work around issues of zoning, parking, staffing, bookkeeping and financial reporting, safety and emergency preparedness, etc. Members of this committee will be representatives of those retail operations and also will include staff members and at-large parishioners with particular interests or skills related to helping us shape sustainable business models and realize the vision of being a village green marked by vitality and welcome.

The Hospitality Committee is designed to help invite, welcome, and connect newcomers to the life of St. Stephen's. There is a wonderful culture of hospitality at St. Stephen's, noticeable in everything from our Sunday greeters to our visitor guides to our Wednesday and Sunday suppers. But in such a large church, we need to be constantly evaluative and intentional about how we welcome and integrate new members. We have made a lot of strides in the past few years, with a new ambassador ministry, a new signage project, a greater emphasis on small groups, and the launch of Connect and Serve. Integrating all of this and more into a simple and well-supported pathway for connection and community is the work of the Hospitality Committee.

The Parish Life Committee is the newest committee, launched in February 2026. It will take time to develop, but the intent is to provide oversight and staff/vestry/parishioner support for the key fellowship events and activities in the seasonal flow of St. Stephen's. We had noticed over time that we often had to scramble to recruit volunteers for some of these events, simply because there wasn't a built-in group keeping such events on their collective radar. This committee will help facilitate and plan for such events and activities as Sunday coffee hour, parish picnics or retreats, ministry fairs, special suppers or movie nights, and so on. This will also be a connecting place for the Women of St. Stephen's, the Young Adult Fellowship, and other demographically-based groups.

The Pastoral Care Committee is designed to bring together the various ministry groups offering pastoral care within the congregation, as well as coordinating with outward-reaching groups that provide broader communal care through ministries related to health and wellness. Examples of the former groups are pastoral visitors, Eucharistic visitors, Gracious Gourmet, the prayer shawl knitters, etc. The goal here will be to weave those threads together through good process and communication so that we are offering connected touchpoints of care to members who are grieving, celebrating the birth of a child, recovering from surgery or illness, homebound, etc. In addition to coordinating among our existing ministries, this committee may support additional periodic activities, such as end of life planning workshops or mental health fairs, services/events at Westminster Canterbury or Cedarfield, flower deliveries around Christmas or Easter, and so forth.

Ministry Nights

Some of these committees meet monthly, while others are designed to meet bi-monthly or quarterly, with periodic email communication in the interim. Either way, all committees gather in the Large Fellowship Hall three times a year for a Ministry Night. The next Ministry Night is Thursday, September 5. The purpose of these

periodic gatherings is to provide clear and open communication and to foster that sense of shared ownership and leadership.

At these ministry nights, all committee members will gather together beginning at 5:15 p.m. and share a meal in the Large Fellowship Hall. During the meal, committee representatives share key updates from their ministry areas, and we then close with a brief worship service. Then members break from 6:30-7:30 p.m. for committee meetings.