

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, AUGUST 16, 2026 | THE TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Penny Nash is our preacher at today's 10 a.m. service; Whitney Edwards preaches August 30

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church is pleased to welcome two familiar faces to the 10 a.m. service this month. The Rev. Penny Nash, who was associate rector here from 2014 to 2020, and served most recently as interim rector of St. James's, Richmond, is our preacher today. The Rev. Whitney Z. Edwards is the former chaplain at St. Christopher's School and has served parishes in this and other dioceses, most recently as vicar of Varina Church. She will preach here Sunday, August 30. We are grateful to have these fine clergy in the pulpit.

Orientation to St. Stephen's offered a week from today (and every month)

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23 | 11:30 A.M. AND 7 P.M., IN THE CAFÉ

If you're newer to St. Stephen's Church or still exploring, attend one of two orientation sessions August 23 to learn the lay of the land, tour the facility, and share your questions. All are welcome! You can also reach out to us anytime by submitting a Welcome Card, found in the pew racks in the church, in kiosks throughout the parish house, at Visitor Central, or at ststephensRVA.org/visitor-card (or scan the QR code in the bottom right corner of this page of the newsletter), or call 804.288.2867. Orientation sessions are offered every month; if August 23 doesn't work for you, watch this space for fall dates.

Four more summer Sundays

STSTEPHENS RVA.ORG/SUMMER-AT-ST-STEPHENS

The Sunday summer schedule through September 6 is:

8 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One

10 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two* *followed by coffee, tea, lemonade*

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

6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper

8 p.m., Compline

**Child care is available during the 10 and 5:30 p.m. services.*

SEE INSIDE FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW PROGRAM YEAR.

Walk the labyrinth at St. Stephen's

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30 | 6:30-7:50 P.M.

You are invited into walking prayer and contemplation with St. Stephen's labyrinth, available between our two evening services (5:30 p.m. Celtic Evensong and Communion, and 8 p.m. Compline) on August 30. The labyrinth will be available in Palmer Hall Chapel, located opposite the parish office, near the entrance from the large parking lot. Walk the labyrinth for 10 to 20 minutes, or simply sit in the chapel in prayer. Facilitators from St. Stephen's labyrinth guild will be present to offer guidance, so no prior experience is necessary. If you have questions, contact the Rev. John Jenkins, jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org.

Help us wish Godspeed and gratitude to Sarah Bartenstein

SEPTEMBER 6

Please join us in the fellowship hall following the 10 a.m. service on Sunday, September 6 for a special reception honoring the ministry of Sarah Bartenstein as our director of communications. Following more than 20 years of service in that role, Sarah will retire on September 15. We will have a brief presentation to send her off with gratitude, though thankfully she and Larry will remain parishioners. If you wish to send a note or gift of thanks, you may submit those to the parish office and we can collect them for her. Any personal checks should be made directly to Sarah.

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.





Take part in the annual Pride Eucharist and Richmond Pride Fest

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 | 6:30 P.M. AND SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church is honored to host the annual Pride Eucharist for the Richmond regions of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia. Held in conjunction with Richmond's Pride festival, this joyous occasion provides a time for the wider community to give thanks for the life and witness of LGBTQ+ people in the church and the world. We're thrilled that the guest preacher will be the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson, ninth bishop of the Diocese of New Hampshire, who served from 2003 to 2013. Bishop Robinson was the first openly gay partnered man to be consecrated a bishop in the Episcopal Church. A festive reception will follow in the large fellowship hall.

Episcopal churches, including St. Stephen's, will also have a tent at Richmond Pride Fest the next day. You can sign up to volunteer at our tent using the QR code. (Please enter only one name per line on the form.) The event takes place from noon to 5 p.m. on Saturday, September 12, at Midtown Green on Leigh Street.



Fall dates to note

As we move through the last weeks of summer, you may be wondering when various things change over to the regular program (academic) year schedule.

- September 4 is the last Friday the parish office closes at 12:30 p.m.
- The summer worship schedule continues through September 6.
- The parish office is closed on Labor Day, Monday, September 7.
- The May Fair House resumes its regular schedule Tuesday, September 8, at 10 a.m.
- The regular worship schedule resumes Sunday, September 13, with services at 8 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m., and 8 p.m. The 9 a.m. Palmer Hall service resumes that day as well. Child care is available during the 9, 11:15 and 5:30 services.
- September 13 is "Rally Day," with a presentation and ministry fair with refreshments after the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services, and the Sunday supper at 5:30 p.m.
- The Wonderful Wednesdays suppers resume September 16, 5:45-6:30 p.m.
- Sunday morning formation for all ages resumes September 20.

Creation care committee to plant native species

St. Stephen's creation care committee is excited to announce that in June the parish received a grant from the Diocese of Virginia to create a native garden on our property. This represents an outstanding opportunity for us to enhance our landscape as well as make a beneficial impact on the environment and raise awareness of the beauty and wisdom of native gardening.

The garden will be planted in front of the Café @ St. Stephen's in the triangular area between the front sidewalk and alley—a site that will be easily viewed and enjoyed by passersby as well as people sitting on the café patio. We hope that placing the garden in a formal setting will signal our commitment to environmental stewardship and inspire others to consider using native plants in their own gardens.

Although the plants will not be put in the ground until October, work on the site will begin immediately. To remove grass and weeds, we are using a process called solarization in which sheets of plastic kill undesirable plants without the need for synthetic herbicides. This may look a little strange for a few weeks, but is a more environmentally sound way of preparing the garden for future success.

If you have questions, please contact Anna Jones, the staff liaison to the committee, ajones@ststephensRVA.org.

News about our website calendar

Soon after we launched our current website, we began using Ministry Platform as our church management system. Ministry Platform includes our membership database, giving records, and the church calendar. Over time, we've integrated MP features with our website, such as providing secure web access to your own membership and financial records, and finding parish directory information for other parishioners who have "opted in." The latest integration is one that many parishioners have eagerly awaited: the church calendar! When you visit the calendar on our website now, you will find all public events. (The previous arrangement meant staff added events one by one, which made for a less comprehensive and consistent approach.)

When an event requires registration, in most cases you'll be able to register right from the calendar. If you are logged into your Ministry Platform profile when you register, you will not have to re-enter your name and contact information!

This would be a great time to make sure you have set up access to your profile using the "Login" portal on our website. While it's a user-friendly process, staff are happy to assist. At Rally Sunday, September 13, staff members will be on hand to walk you through the process.

We appreciate your patience and we hope you find the new calendar helpful. No doubt as we use it, we will continue to make refinements. To see the calendar, visit ststephensRVA.org and select "calendar" from the top-line menu in the white bar.

Family ministry summary coming soon

St. Stephen's family ministry discernment process, begun in the spring, has arrived at a new stage. After gathering robust feedback from over 100 households in the parish, a team of stakeholders and staff have reviewed and refined plans for fall formation and beyond. Look for a summary of those findings and plans next week. On August 27, registration for children, youth, and parents will be available with a link in the **eSpirit**. Many thanks to all who have participated in this process, whether by completing a survey, attending a focus group, or keeping this process in your prayers. Special thanks to the team who have worked so diligently: Lacy Briney, Katie Chase, Diane del Bueno, Ara Hobbs, Lolly Hodge, Sarah Paulette, Whitney Robertson, Emily Souder, and Eric Van Der Hyde; family ministry guild co-chairs Katherine Farley and Greta Kidd; and staff members Caroline Harris, the Rev. John Rohrs, and the Rev. Will Stanley. We are excited about the future of family ministry!

Compline is back, Sundays at 8 p.m.

Sanctuary, the mixed choir that leads our sung Compline service on Sunday nights, has returned after their summer break. If you've been missing this exquisite candlelit 30-minute service—a sound bath for the soul—the wait is over!

School supply drive is a bit different this year

This summer, our food pantry has seen an increase in the number of large families served, some with as many as eight children. Until August 23, we are collecting the following items for families: composition books, spiral-bound notebooks, glue sticks, number 2 pencils, plastic pocket folders, 24-count crayons, 8-pack washable markers, and blunt scissors. In addition, we're accepting student backpacks for Anna Julia Cooper students. All supplies and backpacks should be new. Please place donations in the basket on the outreach table. Thank you!

Addressing food insecurity, week by week

Our food pantry is receiving record-breaking numbers of visitors who come to us for assistance to feed their families. Food insecurity is a growing problem. This week, please consider donating **canned soup and canned fruit** to stock our pantry serving those in need. In addition, the weekly fruit ministry needs fresh apples, oranges, and bananas for their weekly distribution, and plastic or paper grocery bags with handles. You may drop off these items at the Somerset entrance to the parish house anytime, or in baskets in the church. (The church and parish house are open all day Sunday, Monday through Thursday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., Fridays until late afternoon, and Saturdays until noon. If the doors are locked when you arrive, you can leave donations just outside the glass doors to the parish house.) Thank you for your generous response to the growing need.

Mike Maruca, Anna Julia Cooper School, and St. Stephen's Church

Recently The Richmonder published a wonderful article about Mike Maruca, who recently retired as the founding head of school at Anna Julia Cooper School. Scan the QR code to read the article, which details the involvement of St. Stephen's Church, the late David Anderson, and dedicated and generous parishioners and staff in the establishment and growth of this excellent, tuition-free school in Richmond's East End. As Mike has often said, without St. Stephen's there would be no Anna Julia Cooper School. We are so grateful for this partnership.



Congratulations to Mike on his well-deserved retirement, and welcome to Tommy Blain, the new head of school, who previously led a tuition-free public charter school in Boston using a model similar to AJC's.

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 Nametag Central. Temporary DIY tags are available in the meantime.



Coming on Sundays this fall

An exciting adult formation schedule is planned for this fall. More details will be available soon, but here's an overview of Sunday morning offerings.

SUNDAY FORUM

Sundays at 10:10 a.m. in the fellowship hall

Sunday, September 20: As we do each fall, we'll devote the first Sunday Forum to an update on the parish from our leadership.

Sundays September 27, October 11 and October 18: The promise, pitfalls, and ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence will be the focus of a three-part series.

Sunday, October 4: Annual giving campaign launch, "Growing in Grace"

MANY PARENTS, ONE VINE

On Sundays at 10:10 a.m., parents of children and youth are invited to gather in Room 14 (upstairs in the parish house) for presentations on and discussion of issues of particular interest to them.

On September 27, October 11, October 18, and October 25, two mental health professionals will lead "Navigating and supporting the mental health of children and teens."

Parents are encouraged to attend the forum on September 20 for the parish update, and October 4, for the annual giving campaign kick-off.

No registration is required for the forum or Many Parents, One Vine.

About 'Information Central' and other resources

For many years, **Information Central**, located just outside the parish office across from Palmer Hall, has been the location for brochures, flyers, Forward Day by Day booklets, and many other materials and resources. While Information Central continues to serve this function, we have recently added new signs and "stations" throughout the parish house, including:

Visitor Central is the table you see as you enter the parish house from the large parking lot; it provides visitor guides, welcome cards, and other information designed to help visitors feel at home.

Nametag Central: the nametag station has moved to the area between Information Central and the main elevator (across from Palmer Hall). It's where you'll find your nametag stored if you already have one, and a place to request a nametag if you've never had one or misplaced yours.

Family Ministry: a table and kiosk in the hallway outside Palmer Hall Chapel provide information about St. Stephen's programs for children, youth, and parents; materials from Dogwood Preschool and Scout Troop 418; and brochures about diocesan programs for children and youth, including Shrine Mont camps.

Giving Central is a table in the Hollerith Foyer (near the kitchen and the fellowship hall) where you'll find pledge cards and envelopes year-round (and pledge packets during our annual giving campaign), as well as Legacy Society/planned giving information.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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