

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30, 2026 | THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Whitney Edwards is preaching today

The Rev. Whitney Z. Edwards is our preacher at the 10 a.m. service this morning. Whitney 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 is also married to Chris Edwards, director of St. Stephen's Choir. We're grateful to have her here!

Walk the labyrinth at St. Stephen's this evening

TODAY | 6:30-7:50 P.M.

You are invited into walking prayer and contemplation with St. Stephen's labyrinth today, available between our two evening services, 5:30 p.m. Celtic Evensong and Communion, and 8 p.m. Compline. 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

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6 | FOLLOWING THE 10 A.M. SERVICE

Please join us in the fellowship hall following the 10 a.m. service next 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.

Here comes fall!

Next Sunday is the final one for our summer worship schedule. Here is a list of dates for the "changeover" to the regular program year.

- September 4 is the last Friday the parish office closes at 12:30 p.m.
- 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.
- On September 13 we'll have a ministry fair with refreshments after the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services, and the Sunday supper at 5:30 p.m. (see next announcement).
- The Wonderful Wednesdays suppers resume September 16, 5:45-6:30 p.m.
- Sunday morning formation for all ages resumes September 20.

The next step of faith, by faith, to grow in faith

Dear people of St. Stephen's: The church encourages and invites all people to take the next step of faith, by faith, to grow in faith. Whatever your season of life, this is the time to explore the rich opportunities offered for spiritual growth for children, youth, and adults of all ages, from fellowship or formation to ministries of service within or beyond the church. You may explore all opportunities and connect or enroll through the Connect and Serve webpage, our year-round ministry directory.

On Sunday, September 13, we offer an in-person opportunity to connect with ministry leaders and staff at the receptions following the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services and at the community supper following the 5:30 service. Visit ststephensrva.org/connect-and-serve today, and for personal support or guidance as you consider your next step of faith, contact any member of the parish clergy or staff.

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.





Small group registration is live!

Participating in a small group at St. Stephen's is one of the very best ways to get connected in community and to go deeper in faith. This fall we are delighted to once again offer a variety of adult small groups.

Being With groups, developed by The Rev. Dr. Sam Wells at St. Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London, are oriented for newcomers and for those who want to explore basic theological questions in the context of their lives and Christian community.

Emmaus groups, long a fixture at St. Stephen's, are spiritually-grounded groups that combine discussion of the lectionary or other sacred texts with communal discussion and support. Some of those groups are also affinity-based, bringing together women or men, young adults or LGBTQ+ persons, etc.

Finally, we are pleased to offer a number of topical focus groups, ranging from the spirituality of aging to a Sacred Ground racial healing group, a study of the papal encyclical on artificial intelligence, and more. (You can read about some of them at ststephensRVA.org/small-groups.)

Scan the QR code to express your interest in various groups, and a staff member will be in touch in the weeks ahead. Groups will start in late September or early October and typically meet for an hour to an hour and a half each week during the fall; meeting dates and times will be shared after registration concludes.



Family ministry summary and registration now available

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. A summary of those findings and plans is now available. Visit ststephensRVA.org/children-youth for a link to the summary. On the same web page you'll find a link to registration for children, youth, and parents (also linked in the **eSpirit**). Many thanks to all participants in this process. We are excited about the future of family ministry!

Tomorrow, a vigil for city, commonwealth, and country

MONDAY, AUGUST 31 | 6 P.M.

During this difficult time in our country, St. Paul's Church at Capitol Square offers a time and place for all of us to gather to pray for the most vulnerable and powerless among us, lifting our lament, fear, and hope to God's redemptive and healing power. St. Stephen's parishioners have joined this monthly vigil on the church's front steps at 815 E. Grace St., hosted by St. Paul's in collaboration with the Downtown Community Ministry. Free parking is available in St. Paul's garage at 111 N. 8th Street. Contact Jennifer Bousquet if you are able to help with a carpool from St. Stephen's or need a ride, jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org.

Fall Ministry Night

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026, 5:15-7:30 P.M.

A few times during the year, members of various standing committees of the vestry gather 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. Learn about the various ministries happening here, and how and where you might plug in. Sign-up is requested, but not required.



Young adult monthly dinners

THURSDAYS AT 6:30 P.M. SEPTEMBER 10 AND OCTOBER 8

All young adults are invited to an evening of community and food on the second Thursday of each month. Dinners take place at 6:30 p.m. and rotate among eateries near St. Stephen's Church. This is also a great way for young adults who are new (or new-ish) to get connected to the community. A small team of young adults convenes the dinners, with staff support and presence most months. Feel free to bring friends. On September 10 we'll go to Conejo on Patterson Avenue, and on October 8 we'll be at Beijing on Grove. Register using the QR code as soon as possible, and no later than the day before the dinner. This helps us reserve adequate seating at the selected restaurant.



Reasons to visit your online profile

Last summer we introduced a new feature to our website through which parishioners can ensure that their profiles are accurate, and to choose which portions they wish to be accessible to other parishioners. We have continued to launch other features of Ministry Platform since then, and we want to be sure you know what they are, and how they can be helpful.

If you want a parish directory, this is how to get one. We no longer publish parish directories, but your profile offers a way to get the kind of information you'd get from a directory: phone numbers, addresses, and email addresses for parishioners who have opted in to sharing their information.

Ensuring that your email address is up to date makes it easy for **staff or ministry leaders to send you a message** about a group, activity, or ministry you're in.

You can check your giving record online 24/7 for tax purposes or simply to know how much you have paid on your pledge. (In fact, beginning in 2027, paper statements will not be mailed to you unless you request them. You'll have the opportunity to make that request on your pledge card later this fall.)

You'll have access to **a seamless registration process** for many events. If you're logged into the membership portal when you visit our website, and you see an event on the calendar, you will be able to register for it on that same page.

On September 13, the first day of our regular worship schedule, staff will be on hand to help you with your profile if you need it, and they'll even take **a quick head-and-shoulders photo** of you on the spot to upload to your profile, if you wish.

Coming soon: Pride Eucharist and Pride Fest

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11 AT 6:30 P.M. | 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.



Sign up for a Shalom Farms workday by 9/18

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 8:45 A.M.-NOON

Join other parishioners for a morning at Shalom Farms' Northside location at 1311 Westwood Avenue on the campus of Union Presbyterian Seminary. We may be planting fall crops, harvesting crops, washing and packing produce, or whatever tasks are needed. All ages are welcome, though volunteers under 16 should be accompanied by an adult. Please wear sturdy shoes (no flip-flops) and clothes that you don't mind getting dirty. Bring a water bottle. Advance sign-up is required by September 18 (use the QR code). After you register, Jennifer Bousquet will send you a link to a Shalom Farms waiver to complete. If you have questions, please contact Jennifer, jbousquet@ststephensRVA.org.



A parent's guide to substance use in young people

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 28 | 6-7:30 P.M.

St. Stephen's Church will be the location for an event sponsored by the JHW Foundation: a presentation by Linda Hancock, FNP, PhD, and a discussion by a panel of parents and their young adult children about their experiences with substance use, treatment and recovery. This engaging presentation will inform parents about the latest trends in substance use among young people and what parents can do. Please register for this free community-wide event using the QR code.

Linda Hancock is Family Nurse Practitioner who holds a PhD in education. For decades, she helped young people dealing with all the "S's" of health: Sex, Substances, Stress, Social Norms and Spirituality. She recently retired after a 30-year career at Virginia Commonwealth University where she worked in the student health clinic and directed The Well, VCU's Health Promotion and Well-being Center.



The JHW Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness about substance use disorders in young adults and supporting young adults in recovery. The foundation is named in honor of John Henry Watkins III, the son of the foundation's founders who are also St. Stephen's parishioners.



Sundays this fall

An exciting adult formation schedule is planned for this fall. More details will be available soon, but here's a peek at Sundays. The morning offerings below begin at 10:10 a.m. Trailheads, our Sunday evening offering, resumes September 27 at 7 p.m. with a poetry night, and continues with a three-part series on contemplative practices. Details: ststephensRVA.org/adults/adult-formation-sundays/

SUNDAY FORUM

A wide range of topics and speakers are featured, all 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

Parents of children and youth 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.

Fun and fellowship with the Women of St. Stephen's

SEPTEMBER 15 | 6:30-8:30 P.M.

Come to a free, informal event in the fellowship hall to learn more about the Women of St. Stephen's, their many ministries, and the opportunities for you to get involved.

A special creative activity will be available as well: the art of needlepoint, led by Jessica Tongel, a needlepoint designer and member of St. Stephen's needlepoint guild and flower guild. Beginners and seasoned stitchers are welcome! Jessica has designed a needlepoint kit featuring the Episcopal Church shield, with a painted canvas, stitching fibers, needle, threader, and stitching instructions. The cost is \$55 and can be paid with cash, check or charge at the event, but **you must reserve your kit in advance** by emailing woss@ststephensRVA.org no later than September 4.

Join others for an evening of fun, fellowship, creativity, and connection. Bring a friend!

Family ministry party coming in October; sign up now

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 5-7 P.M.

Children, youth and parents are invited to a family ministry gathering to mark the beginning of a new program year. Enjoy delicious food, sweet treats, and lawn games. This event is for families with children and youth to reconnect as we enter 2026-27. The cost is \$15 per person, with a maximum of \$50 for a family. There is no charge for children age 3 and under. Scan the QR code to sign up.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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