

# the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2026 | THE SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

## Sunday formation for all ages resumes today

Sunday formation resumes for all ages this morning at 10:10 a.m. Offerings for children and youth take place on the top floor of the parish house. In addition, an exciting adult formation schedule is planned for this month and beyond. More details are at [ststephensRVA.org/adults](http://ststephensRVA.org/adults), but here's what's coming today and the remaining Sundays in September and October. No registration is needed for Sunday formation offerings.

### CHILDREN & YOUTH

Today, parents and children ages 3 through 5th grade are invited to "come and see" about children's formation at St. Stephen's. Participants will tour our Sunday formation classrooms, meet teachers, and learn about this year's curricula; children will also be able to participate in crafts during their visit. After undergoing a discernment process around family ministry and children's formation last year, we will offer a locally tailored hybrid approach to children's formation using multiple curricula and emphasizing embodied, active learning. Come and see what children's formation looks like here at St. Stephen's Church! Middle and high school students will meet in the main church at 10:10 a.m. to learn about worship ministries open to youth. Sunday Circle will begin the following Sunday, September 27, in Room 4.

### 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 Sunday Forum on September 20 for the parish update, and October 4 for the annual giving campaign kick-off.

### TRAILHEADS

Formation is also offered on selected Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. in a series we call Trailheads. Trailheads resumes September 27 in the Café @ St. Stephen's for a casual evening of poetry reading with parishioners, newcomers, friends, and neighbors. Poetry has long been honored at St. Stephen's Church and incorporated into worship and prayer, especially in the evening, alongside the poetry of both hymnody and the liturgy. All are welcome to gather to listen, and if you wish, to offer one or more works of your own or those of your favorite poets. To offer a reading, simply add your name to the sign-in sheet when you arrive. There will be amplification so all may hear the readings.

Beginning October 11, we'll offer a three-part series, "Contemplation, prayer and practices."

**October 11:** Contemplative Prayer 101

**October 18:** The Labyrinth, walking prayer

*Note the different time and location for this session: 6:30- 7:50 p.m. in Palmer Hall Chapel*

**October 25:** *Lectio Divina*

More details: [ststephensRVA.org/adults-sundays](http://ststephensRVA.org/adults-sundays)

## 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.





## Orientation to St. Stephen's offered today

TODAY | 10:10 A.M. AND 7 P.M., CAFÉ

If you're newer to St. Stephen's Church or still exploring, attend one of two orientation sessions this morning and evening 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](http://ststephensRVA.org/visitor-card). Other options are to scan the QR code in the bottom right corner of page 1 of this newsletter or call 804.288.2867. These orientation sessions are offered every month; if this Sunday doesn't work for you, please look to join us October 19, November 15, or December 20.

## RSVP for a family ministry party

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

Come to the annual family ministry kick-off party where you'll reconnect with other families, meet new friends, and look ahead to all that's coming this fall. This event is for families with children and youth from birth through high school. We'll enjoy pizza from Fireside Pizza, treats from Jiji's Frozen Custard, and lawn games, all outdoors on the Three Chopt Road side of the church. The cost is \$15 per person, with a family maximum of \$50 (there's no cost for children age 3 and under). Reserve your tickets using the QR code by September 27. We hope to see you there!



## Welcome Paula Chambers to interim role!

Parishioner Paula Peters Chambers, a professional freelance writer and journalist, has joined the St. Stephen's staff as Interim Director of Communications, effective this week. Paula brings extensive experience as a writer, editor, and journalism instructor, having worked in a variety of media throughout Virginia and Missouri, where she did her undergraduate and graduate work, respectively. Paula will work part-time, approximately 20 hours per week, in coordination with Dillon Gwaltney, our Communications Associate, and others. Meanwhile, the search for a long-term Director of Communications is ongoing, with candidates under active consideration. We are so grateful to Paula for her willingness to help us hold down the fort during this time of transition.

## 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 at [ststephensRVA.org/children-youth](http://ststephensRVA.org/children-youth). 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!

## Register for a small group by September 24

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.

Descriptions and registration are at [ststephensRVA.org/small-groups](https://ststephensRVA.org/small-groups).

## World War II memoir available

More than 20 years ago, St. Stephen's parishioner and staff member Lyn Presson began collecting memories of World War II from parishioners who had served during the war in the armed forces or in other roles. Soon after retirement, Lyn enlisted help from parishioner Nancy Emerson, a professional editor. Some veterans were eager to tell their stories, while others required a bit of coaxing, but over the years they and their family members shared recollections, photos, and mementoes for this project. In 2025, Nancy completed her work and provided all the materials to the parish communications office for production, design, and publication. Production costs for the hardbound book are being covered by the sales price (\$40 per copy), as well as generous donations from several members of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, including those who made donations to the Women of St. Stephen's in memory of Sara Frances Derieux. Visit [ststephensRVA.org/World-War-ii-memoirs](https://ststephensRVA.org/World-War-ii-memoirs) for details about ordering deadlines.



## 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 you of the latest trends in substance use among young people and what you can do. Please register for this free community event with the QR code.



## Thursday Bible study group to read Romans

OCTOBER 1 THROUGH NOVEMBER 19 | 10 A.M.

In this fall's Thursday morning Bible Study we will explore Paul's Letter to the Romans. Romans has been enormously influential in the development of Christian faith, Christian theological reflection, and Christian practice. The longest of all the New Testament epistles, it contains many famous passages and the New Testament's most developed theology of salvation. We will examine the occasion on which Paul wrote to the Romans, what he sought to say to them, and what this meant in the context of Jewish-Gentile relations at the time. Romans offers careful readers much to reflect on, especially when reading and discussing with others. No registration is needed for this offering in Room 14.

## Choristers have resumed rehearsals

REHEARSALS: WEDNESDAYS OR THURSDAYS, 5-6 P.M.

St. Stephen's Choristers welcome all children in grade 1 and above. Rehearsals are held Wednesday and Thursday evenings; Thursday is for those whose schedules do not permit Wednesday participation. No experience is required for this high-level, potentially life-changing experience. It may take parents' gentle encouragement to give the choir a try; not all children will take the initiative. Contact Robert McCormick, [rmccormick@ststephensRVA.org](mailto:rmccormick@ststephensRVA.org), or visit [ststephensRVA.org/choristers](https://ststephensRVA.org/choristers).

## 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 soup and tuna 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. Drop off these items at the Somerset entrance to the parish house or in baskets in the church. The church and parish house are open all day Sunday, Monday through Thursday, from 7 a.m.-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.

## Remember the Ladies: Fashion, Freedom, and the Fabric of a Nation 1776-2026

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 11 A.M.-1 P.M.

The Women of St. Stephen's will present parishioner Whitney Robertson, a clothing and textile historian and founder of Heirloom Care LLC, for a behind-the-scenes look at Remember the Ladies, an exhibition of 250 years of women's clothing that she is guest-curating for the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library in Staunton. While learning about beautiful garments and the women who wore them, we will explore what it means to look at history through clothes and touch on the spirituality of connecting to ourselves and our predecessors through their garments. Bring a friend for this engaging presentation in the fellowship hall. A light lunch will be provided.

## Gallery displays for September and October

New art will be on display later this week from Wanda Ferguson and Margaret Porter Daniel. Before retirement, Wanda taught art in middle school for 30 years. She now takes photos and paints with acrylics. She loves the outdoors and paints *plein air* or from her photos. Margaret is a retired art teacher and clinical herbalist. She is fascinated by the energy of plants as they relate to people and animals and considers *materia medica* (therapeutic properties) when creating her multimedia pieces.



## Choral Evensong for the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 1 | 6 P.M.

The service of Choral Evensong (sung Evening Prayer) is a jewel of the Anglican musical and liturgical tradition. Please join us at 6 p.m. on Thursday, October 1, when the St. Stephen's Choir will offer Choral Evensong for the feast of St. Michael and All Angels (transferred). The service will last no longer than 40 minutes, and will include music of Margaret Burk, David Hogan, and Charles Villiers Stanford.



## Wednesday evening series: Mysteries of the Universe

WEDNESDAYS AT 6:30 P.M. | SEPTEMBER AND 30, OCTOBER 7 AND 14 | PALMER HALL  
A new Wednesday evening series begins this week following the parish supper.

### September 23

This series begins with Dr. Jack Singal, a professor of astrophysics at the University of Richmond. Using Exodus 33:20 as a framework, Dr. Singal will help us explore how the universe is being revealed through new discoveries in the fields of astrophysics and cosmology.

### September 30

The Rev. Dr. Pamela Conrad is an astrobiologist and former NASA scientist who worked on the 2020 Mars Rover mission. She is also an Episcopal priest serving as the interim rector at Memorial Episcopal Church in Baltimore. Dr. Conrad will guide us on a "believer's journey through the stars," the title of her new book.

### October 7

The Rev. Cate Anthony will conclude the speaking/discussion portion of the series by reflecting on her own interest in the mysteries of the universe, and sharing resources for further study and exploration such as a local planetarium and telescope, "dark parks," and more.

### October 14

The final gathering in the series is a parish movie night with popcorn and a showing of Steven Spielberg's *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*. Questions? Contact the Rev. Cate Anthony. No registration needed.



## An invitation to the Episcopal Church

WEDNESDAYS, 6:30-8 P.M. | OCTOBER 7 THROUGH NOVEMBER 18

This introductory class is ideal for all who are exploring or interested to learn more about the Episcopal Church and about St. Stephen's, whether you are newer here or newly curious, and it also is a good place to meet people. Topics include our unique identity and perspective, historical origins, our worship, beliefs, practices, and more. The class is excellent preparation if you are considering Baptism or joining the church from another religious tradition. Most of all, this is a supportive and welcoming place to ask questions, however big or small. The class will meet in the Cafe @ St. Stephen's and will be led by two members of St. Stephen's clergy. Questions? Contact the Rev. John Jenkins. Registration is required.



**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)