

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 4, 2026 | THE FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Blessings for living creatures, both great and small

TODAY | 9 A.M. AND 3 P.M.

The feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, patron saint of animals and ecology, falls on this Sunday. We celebrate his life and works with prayers and readings alongside an observance of the ecumenical Season of Creation. The celebration includes two opportunities for the animals we love to receive a blessing. Palmer Hall worship will take place on the Three Chopt lawn (rain location: Palmer Hall Chapel) and will include time for blessing pets within the service. **Please bring your own chair.** At 3 p.m. we'll hold a traditional Blessing of the Animals service in front of the doors facing Three Chopt Road (rain location: large fellowship hall). At either service, all pets are welcome – dogs, cats, gerbils, crabs, parakeets, geckos – on leashes and in carriers or cages.

Growing in grace

TODAY | 10:10 A.M. AND 6:30 P.M.

We recall the exhortation from Peter, at the end of his second epistle, to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord.” Two thousand years later, our community of St. Stephen's Church continues to strive to grow together in grace, through spiritual formation, acts of compassion and service, liturgies of worship and praise, and stewardship of all that is entrusted to us. Pledges and gifts toward our operating budget make that possible. This week's Sunday Forum will offer more details about the campaign's goals, and we'll hear from the campaign co-chairs about what “Growing in Grace” means to them. The presentation will also be offered during Sunday supper, which begins at 6:30 p.m.

Also, this Sunday and next, all parishioners who have given or pledged to St. Stephen's in the past will be able to pick up their personalized envelope at Giving Central in the Hollerith Foyer; after October 11, these will be mailed. Unlabeled envelopes for anyone to take will be available at Giving Central and on the Family Ministry table.

Note on Season of Creation

SUNDAYS IN OCTOBER

In the ecumenically adopted Season of Creation, Episcopalians join with Christians around the world to celebrate in prayer and action our Gospel calling to protect the Earth and reform our relationship with God's creation. The 80th General Convention of the Episcopal Church recognized climate change as “an all-encompassing social crisis and moral emergency that impacts and interconnects every aspect of pastoral concern including health, poverty, employment, racism, social justice, and family life, and that can only be addressed by a Great Work involving every sector of society, including the Church.” St. Stephen's observes this season throughout October with special emphasis in our prayers, hymns, and ministries to deepen our response to the living God and strengthen our resolve to follow Jesus in this critical time.

Learn and lunch with Women of St. Stephen's

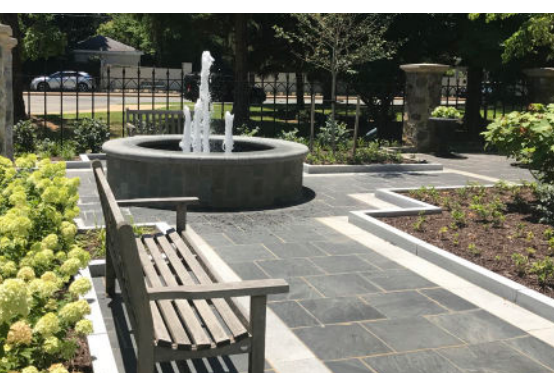
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6 | 11 A.M.–1 P.M.

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: Fashion, Freedom, and the Fabric of a Nation, 1776-2026,” an exhibition of 250 years of women's clothing that she has guest-curated 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 main fellowship hall. A light lunch will be provided.

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.





Sunday formation is underway!

CHILDREN & YOUTH: Children ages 4 through 5th grade are invited to classrooms on the second floor of the parish house. Students in grades 6 through 12 meet for Sunday Circle in Room 4, also upstairs. To register your child or youth, scan the QR code here.



MANY PARENTS, ONE VINE: All parents are invited to meet today in the large fellowship hall for the launch of the annual giving campaign. On October 11, Dr. Bryn Schiele Moore, licensed clinical psychologist at Summit Emotional Health, will speak about supporting different ways of thinking and learning among children and youth. October 18 features a presentation from Bruce Hammond, LCSW, about teen mental health. No registration is required for these gatherings in room 14.

TRAILHEADS: Trailheads resumes October 11 in the Café @ St. Stephen's at 7 p.m. with the first of a multi-part series, "Contemplative Prayer 101." On October 18, the series continues in Palmer Hall Chapel, 6:30-7:50 p.m. (note the early start), with "The Labyrinth: Walking Prayer." Trailheads will resume in the café on October 25 with *Lectio Divina*.

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, jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org. Register by October 6 via the QR code here.



Midweek evening series looks to the universe

WEDNESDAYS, OCTOBER 7 AND 14 | 6:30 P.M.

Two nights remain of a series focused on different ways to contemplate the universe. Meet in Palmer Hall Chapel following the parish supper. No registration is required.

October 7

The Rev. Cate Anthony will reflect on her own interest in the mysteries of the universe, and share resources for further study and exploration.

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*.

Fall newcomer reception

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8 | 5:30-7 P.M.

A few times during the year, the rector and other members of the parish staff host a reception especially for those who are new to this community of faith. And the definition of "new" is completely up to you! If you've recently joined St. Stephen's Church, or you have visited but have not yet decided whether this will become your church home, please join us! These gatherings are very informal. We gather in the courtyard (or large fellowship hall in case it rains), and offer appetizers, wine, beer, and non-alcoholic beverages. Sign up via this QR code is helpful, but not required.



Young adults monthly fellowship

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8 | 6:30 P.M.

All young adults are invited to an evening of community and food on the second Thursday of each month. In October, we'll be at Beijing on Grove. A small team of parishioners convenes the dinners, with staff support and presence most months. This is a great way for young adults who are new (or new-ish) to get connected to the community. Feel free to bring friends. Use the QR code to register as soon as possible, and no later than the day before the dinner. This enables us to reserve adequate seating.



Welcoming a new team member

We are excited to have Alexis Capehart join our sexton team! Alexis brings experience in a number of contexts. Most recently, she coordinated the daily facilities operations at an assisted living community. Alexis' coworkers and friends describe her as hard-working, organized, and someone who goes above and beyond. She blends a passion for facilities management with an upbeat, cheerful personality, making her a wonderful fit on our team. Please say hello to Alexis when you have the opportunity.

Diaper drive begins

OCTOBER 3-18

The Women of St. Stephen's are hosting a diaper drive on behalf of Little Hands Virginia, a nonprofit that provides essentials to children in need from birth to three years old. New, disposable diapers (size newborn to 5) and wipes may be left in the donation area near the first-floor restrooms. Questions? Email woss@ststephensRVA.org.

Sharing concerns about creation care

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13 | 6:30-8:30 P.M.

As part of the Season of Creation, St. Stephen's creation care ministry is sponsoring a Climate Café, which is a safe, informal, and inclusive gathering where people meet to openly share their thoughts, fears, and feelings about the climate crisis. Originating in Scotland in 2015, these sessions focus on emotional processing and deep listening rather than debating politics or pushing specific policy actions. We will gather to listen and support one another. The program will be led by Paul Amrhein, former Franciscan and retired Human Concerns Minister, and Beth Nelson, graduate of the School of the Wild. Both are former faculty members of the RUAH school of spiritual guidance at Richmond Hill. Please sign up using the QR code provided. Questions? Email Anna Jones, ajones@ststephensRVA.org.



Next orientation is on the horizon

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18 | 10:10 A.M. AND 7 P.M.

If you're newer to St. Stephen's Church or still exploring, attend one of two orientation sessions in the café on the third Sunday in October to learn the lay of the land, tour the facility, and

share your questions. All are welcome! You can also reach out to us any time 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. You may also scan the QR code on the front page of this newsletter or call 804.288.2867. These orientation sessions are offered monthly, so if October 18 doesn't work for you, another will soon occur.

Annual All Saints service

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2 | NOON

Our traditional All Saints Service is a deeply meaningful liturgy offering time to light a candle, place it on the altar, and speak the name of a beloved one who is now at peace. Seeing the altar filled with the "saints in light," as the burial service says, is a beautiful and holy sight. The bulletin for this service will include the names of those under the care of St. Stephen's who have died since All Saints Day 2025. If you would like to add the name of a loved one who has died in the past year and may not be known to the parish staff, please contact Kitty Ball, kball@ststephensRVA.org, by Monday, October 26.

Holiday shopping season is coming

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3 | 10 A.M.-5 P.M.

Come to May Fair House on Election Day to start (or complete!) your holiday purchases. The shop always has abundant options, and there's even more in the holiday season: stocking stuffers, entertaining needs, indoor and outdoor décor, Advent calendars and more. Food also makes a great gift; our freezers are bursting with casseroles, sides, breads, and desserts. Plus, the holiday bazaar includes special guest vendors. All proceeds support the Women of St. Stephen's outreach grants.

Caring for the caregivers

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 18 | NOON-1:30 P.M.

Caring for those we love with dementia is a challenging journey. St. Stephen's pastoral care ministry has created a special gathering for people caring for someone living with dementia as a resting place for refreshment, friendship, mutual support and perhaps a little grace along the path. While there is no charge, it is helpful to know that you are coming and if you have any particular dietary restrictions or other ways that we might make this time more welcoming for you. Please use the QR code to register by Friday, November 13.



Thursday Bible study group to read Romans

OCTOBER 1 THROUGH NOVEMBER 19 | 10 A.M. ROOM 14

In this fall's Thursday morning Bible Study we will explore Paul's Letter to the Romans. 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. No registration is needed for this offering, and you may join in at any time.



Choristers have resumed 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 in upstairs choir rooms (17 and 18); Thursday is for those whose schedules do not permit Wednesday participation. No experience is required and children may join at any time. 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, or use the QR code here for more information.



Music to our ears

Much of our music for today is chosen to honor St. Francis of Assisi. At the 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. services in the main church, the first hymn will be the beloved "All creatures of our God and King," a text by St. Francis in an English translation by William Draper and sung to the familiar 17th-century German tune *Lasst uns erfreuen*. In Palmer Hall Chapel, our St. Stephen's Choristers will sing "Most High, omnipotent, good Lord," a different translation of Francis' hymn by Howard Chandler Robbins, with music by 20th-century American composer Calvin Hampton. Yet another musical rendering of that same hymn will be sung at Compline: English composer William Harris' original setting of "All creatures." Additional musical highlights in the 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. main church services include a beautiful choral piece that sets to music the famous prayer attributed to St. Francis by Canadian-American composer Kola Owolabi, currently Professor of Organ at the University of Notre Dame. The Celtic service at 5:30 p.m. will have several lovely selections honoring St. Francis as well as God's creation.



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. This week, please consider donating **canned chicken or tuna, pasta and pasta sauce, cereal, and canned vegetables** to stock our pantry. In addition, the weekly fruit ministry needs fresh apples, oranges, and bananas, 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. 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.



Sunday suppers are for everyone

SUNDAYS | 6:30 P.M.

Each Sunday evening following the Celtic service, we serve an informal supper in the fellowship hall. Join others for this simple, delicious, donation-based meal. Most meals are vegetarian, and vegan and gluten-free options are available. It's a wonderful way to meet others. No reservations or registration required.



St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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