St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

the SPIRIT

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2026 | THE LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Expressing gratitude

During a season where we give particular attention to giving thanks: thank you! **Thank you** to all who took part in the Week of Compassion, serving others and learning about ways to support the "least of these" in our community and beyond. **Thank you** to those who have filled Thanksgiving boxes (or offered a donation so one could be filled on your behalf) so that our neighbors in the East End of Richmond can enjoy a festive holiday meal. (Today is the deadline!) **Thank you** to all who continue to support our year-round food ministry, which is providing sustenance to twice as many people this year as a year ago. Please continue to bring fresh bananas, apples, and oranges along with the identified need of the week. And **hank you** to all who have made a pledge to our annual giving campaign. Your generosity makes our mission possible!

Today, a celebration of our annual giving campaign

Today we celebrate the progress we've made since the October launch of our annual giving campaign, Growing in Grace. We are so grateful to all who have pledged so far. If you have not made a commitment for 2027, we invite you to do so as soon as possible!

As of Wednesday, November 18, 570 households, or 67 percent of our goal of 850, have pledged $2,372,801, or 73 percent of our goal of $3 million. Nearly half of the pledges already received are greater than a prior pledge.

The campaign will continue until we reach the goals, so it's not too late to make a pledge. You may use the QR code here or pick up a packet at Information Central (next to the parish office), read about the campaign, and tear off the pledge card, fill it out, and place it in one of the black dropboxes. Campaign materials are also on the Giving Table in the Hollerith Foyer.

IN PALMER HALL, children will come forward to present their giving boxes. This year, children selected outreach partner ACTS, Area Congregations Together in Service, a nonprofit that works to prevent homelessness, to receive their gifts.

FOLLOWING THE CELTIC EVENSONG AND COMMUNION SERVICE today, all are invited to gather in the courtyard for a ritual burning of prayers with incense. This is an embodied way of offering the inmost reflections of one's prayer life to the transforming, consuming flame of God's love. This practice is directly linked with Growing in Grace contemplative prayer practice, which can be found at Giving Central and via the QR code here. Anyone may bring and offer written prayers. Participants will be invited to take turns committing their prayers to the fire along with a pinch of incense.

Today's adult formation

SUNDAY FORUM, 10:10 A.M., LARGE FELLOWSHIP HALL: Today, the Rev. John Jenkins will moderate a conversation with the Rev. Bob Hetherington and parishioner Mike Santoro. Their topic: the murder of Jonathan Myrick Daniels, an Episcopal seminarian who protected 17-year-old Ruby Sales from a racist attack. The discussion will focus on Daniels' life and legacy, and what we can learn from his extraordinary example.

MANY PARENTS, ONE VINE, 10:10 A.M., ROOM 14: We conclude our series, "Reading the Bible with heart and mind" with a sharing of recommended editions and devotions for parents, younger children, and teens; podcasts, movies, and books. Feel free to come with materials you have found to be useful.

THE CHURCH OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED ON FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27. THE CAFÉ WILL BE CLOSED THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26, AND FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27. THE FARMERS MARKET WILL BE OPEN SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28.

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.













TRAILHEADS, 7 P.M., CAFE @ ST. STEPHEN'S: Tonight will be 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. If you wish to offer one or more works of your own or from a favorite poet, add your name to the sign-in sheet when you arrive. There will be amplification so all may hear. Send questions to the Rev. John Jenkins, **jjenkins@ststephensRVA.org.**

Gobble, gobble: Time to fill a Thanksgiving box!

RETURN BOXES SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 22; HELP DELIVER TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24

A few empty "turkey boxes" remain at the Outreach table in the main hallway; please grab one! The ingredients collected will make hearty meals for families at Anna Julia Cooper School, Fairfield Court Elementary School, and UP RVA, all of which are ministry partners in Richmond's East End. Feel free to decorate your box before returning it to church. Filled boxes are due at St. Stephen's by **Sunday, November 22** at 8 p.m. We are also looking for nine drivers to assist with delivery on **Tuesday, November 24,** 9:30 a.m. If you can help, register via the QR code here.

Final call for vestry nominations

DEADLINE TO SUBMIT FORMS IS TODAY, NOVEMBER 22

Every year, the congregation elects new members of the vestry, a body that tends to temporal matters of the parish in conjunction with the rector. A nominating committee gathers names and offers a slate to the vestry for consideration at the annual meeting. Use the QR code to learn what is asked of vestry members and the nominating process. You may nominate someone for vestry service, but the individual must fill out an online form. Self-nominations are welcome. All forms are available on our website.

Advent and Christmas events and signups

Next Sunday is the first Sunday in Advent, which means a bevy of activities are on the horizon. The season begins with the Advent fair next Sunday (see page 3 of this newsletter. On **Sunday, December 6,** the youth group will enjoy a **bus tour of holiday light displays**. Children and youth — and some animals — will present the **live Nativity on Monday, December 14**. Our 101st **Christmas pageant** will be **Sunday, December 20.** All are welcome to the live Nativity and the pageant. Sign-ups for participants and helpers are now live via the QR codes here.

Youth group lights tour

Live Nativity

Christmas pageant

Thanksgiving Day service is open to all

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26 | 10:30 A.M.

All are invited to St. Stephen's annual Thanksgiving Day service, a popular offering within the community. This worship takes the place of our weekday 8:10 a.m. Morning Prayer. Come for a sermon, stirring music led by St. Stephen's Choir and a brass ensemble, and beautiful autumnal decorations by our flower guild. Attendance is strong, so plan to arrive early, and, please, don't save seats. We invite everyone to bring donations of canned and boxed goods for our food ministry. If you will be out of town on Thanksgiving Day — or you are at home, basting the turkey — you can participate via livestream.

Christmas shop helps parents provide for kids

DONATIONS ACCEPTED NOVEMBER 29–DECEMBER 13

Every year, St. Stephen's parishioners organize a Christmas shop at Fairfield Court Elementary School to serve families from Fairfield and from Anna Julia Cooper School. This shop allows parents to select items for their children and wrap the gifts themselves. All gifts are donated by St. Stephen's parishioners. An online sign-up provides instructions about what to purchase; please do not buy gifts without using a sign-up form. If you prefer paper sign-up, a sheet will be on the Outreach table starting November 29. The shop also needs delivery helpers to take items to Fairfield Court on December 16 and volunteers to assist shoppers on December 17. For more information about gifts and volunteering, scan the QR code here.

Plan now to attend the Advent fair!

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 | 10 A.M.

St. Stephen's annual Advent Fair is for families of every size and composition. Come create an Advent wreath for your home, enjoy refreshments, and spend time with other parishioners as we enter a holy season. We will also have special activities for children, building upon the Advent theme. There is no cost to attend the fair. If you would like to make a wreath, the fee is $20 for a wreath form and candles. Some live greenery for wreaths will be provided, and we invite you to also bring some clippings from your own yard to share. You may pay by cash, check, or credit card on the day of the event. We welcome assistance from youth and adult volunteers as well. We especially need helpers to bring in greens. Look for ways that you can take part in this festive occasion by using this QR code.

Advent meditations

DAILY, STARTING NOVEMBER 29

In past years, St. Stephen's has offered daily Advent meditations written by our own parishioners. This has been a welcome offering for many, as it helps to focus attention on the reflective aspects of the season, quieting some of the secular noise around us. This year, due to the transition in the church communications department, we will instead offer a pathway to Advent Word, a daily meditation published by Forward Movement. Details will come in the next eSpirit.

'Sounds of the Season' concert

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1 | 10:30 A.M.–1 P.M.

The Women of St. Stephen's invite the congregation and their guests to enjoy the music of Advent and Christmas with a special concert in the church featuring St. Stephen's Handbell Choir and Robert McCormick, organist and our director of music. This will be the first concert featuring St. Stephen's Handbell Choir under the direction of Paul Honaker. Everyone is welcome to attend this free concert, so bring a friend! A festive holiday luncheon will follow in the large fellowship hall; the cost of lunch is $15 and will be collected at the door. It is helpful, but not essential, to sign up for lunch in advance. A sheet indicating interest is at the interior entrance to May Fair House.

Christkindlmarket festivities

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2 | 4:30–7:30 P.M.

The Christkindlmarket is a festive annual holiday craft fair hosted by the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's. The market is indoors in the fellowship halls and the Café @ St. Stephen's, and outdoors in the courtyard. More than 20 local artisans are joined by carolers, food trucks, festive beverages, and more. The May Fair House shop, which carries a selection of gifts and prepared foods, will also be open. The fair is open to all; admission and parking are free.

'Lost and found': a retreat for grief and loss

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6 | 1–4:30 P.M.

On the second Sunday in Advent, we welcome David Hoover, a nationally known therapist, retreat leader, and spiritual director, for "Lost and found, a day of reflection, hope and healing." Through spiritual practices and safe small group discussions, participants will be guided to explore grief and loss, as well as the gifts discovered along the way. Together, we will reflect on how we might become more resilient in the face of challenges ahead. All are welcome. Please sign up via this QR code by December 1.

Christmas memorials

DUE WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9

Many people like to make contributions for the beautiful arrangements for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services in memory of loved ones. The names of those remembered are listed in the service bulletins. If you would like to give a Christmas memorial, please submit your request **no later than Wednesday, December 9**. Complete the form for **Holiday Flower Memorials** via this QR code. Online reservations and payments are preferred, but if you would rather write a check, please make it payable to St. Stephen's Church and write "Christmas Flower Memorial" on the memo line. Please note that you must complete both steps: the request form and the payment. If you send a payment without filling in a request form, neither the flower guild nor the finance office will have the information essential to include your loved one's name. Thank you!

A sabbatical sharing

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10 | 10–11 A.M., PALMER HALL

Join the Rev. Cate Anthony for a special presentation about her 2026 sabbatical. Cate will share stories and learnings from her time away, focusing especially on her pilgrimage to Scotland to walk St. Cuthbert's Way. All are welcome to attend. While her remarks will not be livestreamed, they will be recorded and shared online.













Volunteers sought for Wegmans food collection

SATURDAYS | 10-11:30 A.M.

Each Saturday, a group of volunteers drives to the Wegmans on Midlothian Turnpike to pick up 500-700 pounds of donated food for our pantry. We weigh the donations, load them onto a church bus, and return to St. Stephen's. Additional hands help unload at church. We're looking for more folks to help with all tasks. To participate, you must be able to lift 30 pounds and be willing to take a short, online food safety training. We're asking for a monthly or twice-monthly commitment on Saturdays, 10-11:30 a.m. For questions or to sign up, contact Anna Jones, **ajones@ststephensRVA.org.**

Welcome to Will Van Denk

The most recent addition to our sexton team is Will Van Denk, whom you are likely to see Sunday through Wednesday evenings. Will brings more than 10 years of experience in the hospitality industry, most recently as a food service and catering manager in a hotel. Will combines exceptional customer service with a strong focus on operational efficiency, making him a valuable addition to our staff. Please say hello when you have the chance!

Secure tickets now for Winter Solstice Concert

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16 | 7 P.M.

The St. Stephen's *a cappella* Compline choir, Sanctuary, offers a concert to feed the spirit on one of winter's longest nights. Seasonal music and poetry will center around the texts of the Great O Antiphons, pleas for longing and fulfillment at the darkest time of year. Tickets are $20 ($10 for students) and are available via this QR code.

Music to our ears

At the 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. services, the final hymn will be "All praise to thee, for thou, O King divine" to the tune *Engelberg.* (Some might not know that each hymn tune has its own name, often designated by the composer, but far from always. We print the tune name of each hymn on the right margin.) This hymn has become beloved in many Episcopal churches and for good reason. Its elegant text, based on Philippians 2:5-11, was written in 1938 and first included in the Hymnal 1940 (our current hymnal's predecessor). Author F. Bland Tucker was an Episcopal priest and hymn writer who for many years was rector of Christ Church, Savannah. Tucker intended the text to be sung to the tune *Sine Nomine* (the tune associated most closely with "For all the saints"), but it ended up being paired with *Engelberg,* composed by the Anglo-Irish Charles Villiers Stanford. Stanford intended his tune for the text "For all the saints," so it seems fitting that the pairing we know is such a happy one.

FOOD PANTRY NEEDS: CANNED FRUIT, PASTA SAUCE, AND FRESH APPLES, ORANGES, AND BANANAS

St. Stephen's
EPISCOPAL CHURCH
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

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

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