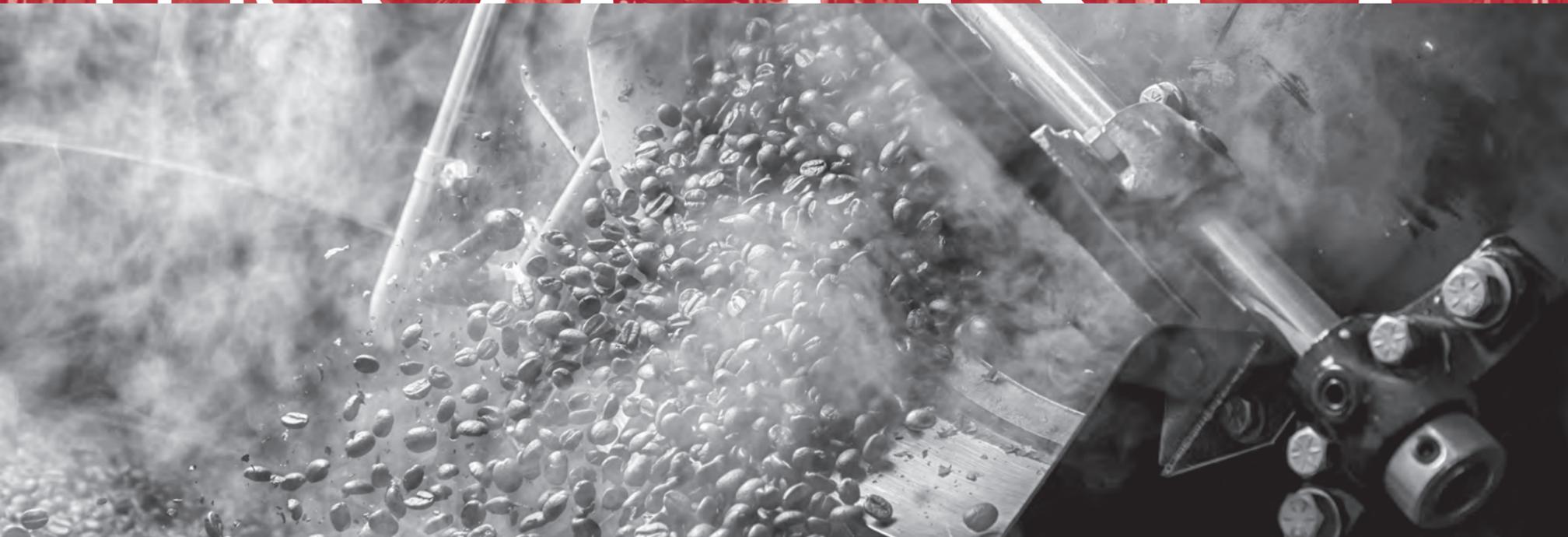


seasons of the SPIRIT



Full-bodied, aromatic, flavorful

Zach is a six-foot-seven former heroin addict and meth cook, with a shaved head, body piercings (including his tongue), and arms covered in tattoos, up to his neck. Zach is also a former inmate from the Skagit County Jail in the state of Washington, where he served time for robbery. But he had a conversion experience of sorts when a preacher introduced him to the Jesus who sought out misfits and outsiders, the Jesus who, Zach eventually realized, had been with him all along.



By Gary D. Jones

Now, Zach works in a church's coffee roasting ministry, the Underground Coffee Project, in Skagit County. And while he listens to heavy metal music and roasts coffee beans, Zach reflects on how the coffee roasting process is a lot like his experience of being opened to God.

Zach sets the roaster to 350 degrees initially and pours a batch of beans into the roasting pan. After a while, the beans begin to expand, and there's a first crack. That's when the chaff, the outer coating, pops off, Zach explains. He gradually increases the heat, and there's a second and a third crack, bringing out the full flavor and wonderful aroma of the coffee bean that almost all of us love.

"It's like when the heat of the Holy Spirit comes upon you," Zach says. "It cracks you open and makes you better." That is what happened to him, he says, when he was brought into an environment where people loved him and prayed for him. He didn't crack right away, he recalls, but he definitely felt himself expanding.

Zach's friend and fellow coffee roaster, Chris, agrees. "You take the hard bean, bring it into an environment with a lot of God's love and watch it break. It's beautiful."

Zach is just one of several fascinating and loveable characters in the parish's summer book for 2017, *Soil and Sacrament*, by Fred Bahnsen. Fred explains that although Zach's appearance might suggest otherwise, Zach is one of the gentlest and most loving souls he has ever met.

"You know why I got all these tattoos, man?" Zach asks. "So I could cover up my compassion. I feel people's hurt so much that I had to cover myself up so I could keep them away. The thing people like me battle with most is ourselves." (Sound familiar?) Nowadays, Zach visits and prays with other outcasts who would never darken the door of a church, and every time he does, he says he finds Jesus is already there, "wearing the cloak of the outcast and poor."

Many of us are tough nuts to crack. We develop a hard, protective shell to keep our precious, vulnerable, and God-given souls from being harmed. Tattoos and body piercings might not be your thing; maybe it's club memberships and expensive possessions. Others of us adopt personal habits that keep others at bay, by being ornery, pushy, combative, or rude. You don't have to shave your head, tattoo your arms, and pierce your tongue, nose, and eyebrow – there are more conventional ways of developing a protective shell. We all have our preferred method.

The colorful cast of characters in *Soil and Sacrament*, and the fascinating communities they inhabit, have me thinking again about what it means to be human and what it means to be the church in this amazing world of ours. Early

in the book, the author goes on an extended retreat to the monastic community at Mepkin Abbey in South Carolina, where he meets brothers who have more in common with Zach than you might imagine. They are not people who have come to the abbey to escape an evil world; rather, they are people who have realized that their biggest battle is with themselves.

On the author's last day at Mepkin Abbey, he starts to realize what is happening to him. As he sang the Lord's Prayer at Evensong, Fred writes, "a sweetness welled in me and brought me to tears. The music, the prayers, the bowing and rising, the incense – all of it was breaking down my defenses. That's what good liturgy does. It breaks your heart open and turns you to God."

God knows we have different ways of defending ourselves and creating hard, protective shells, which perhaps is why God offers different ways of expanding and cracking us open.

I hope many of you will come to hear Fred when he comes to speak at St. Stephen's on September 16 and 17. *Soil and Sacrament* is a terrific read, with its fascinating and endearing characters. It already has me appreciating anew what I love about St. Stephen's Church—our daily, monastic-like liturgical life; our embracing ministry of hospitality and loving kindness; and the opportunity and encouragement to encounter the Christ who is cloaked in the poor, outcasts, and prisoners, as well as in our own families, friends and neighbors. It's kind of like a big coffee roaster, with aromatic expanding and cracking, an environment with a lot of God's love, the fire of the Holy Spirit, creating something beautiful and nearly impossible to resist. ❀

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Sarah Bartenstein

Café construction to begin this summer

New 'village green' ministry expected to be ready for fall 2017 opening

Thanks to the generosity of more than one hundred families and individuals, St. Stephen's will be able to unveil its new café ministry this coming fall.

The café will be located in the former choir room, at the west end of the parish house, where it will have its own entrance from Three Chopt Road. This space—a comfortable gathering place for people of all ages—will serve, much like the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's does, as a new entry point to the church, and help to ensure that St. Stephen's continues to grow, even as many traditional, mainline churches face declining attendance.

Also central to the vision of this new space is the strengthening of our youth ministry. Speaking about the café in the Forum on March 26, Allison Seay—associate for religion and the arts, and a member of the family ministries team—described how, when she was teaching at Collegiate School, her most meaningful conversations with students tended to happen not during office hours, but waiting in line for the chicken nuggets at lunch.

The café will be a space for those easy, daily interactions that draw us closer to each other and ultimately foster real trust and relationship. Each weekday afternoon, a member of the family ministry staff—Sarah-Keel Crews, Allison, or I—will be present in the café to greet kids who stop by after school, and simply to be available.

As you may know, work towards the café ministry began in May 2016 when a café project team formed to discern the best way forward. Through many meetings and much research, the team determined that to do this project right—not only for the creation of the café space, but also for essential renovations to an aging part of our facility—it was important to hire a well-regarded design firm. Thanks to a generous gift from an anonymous donor, we contracted with Baskervill in January. The initial gift of \$30,000 covered both the design costs and some structural retrofitting, including installing an exterior door.

In late March, Baskervill's beautiful design drawings were presented to the parish and met with much enthusiasm and good questions. Some wondered, for example, how a café would affect the annual operating budget. Mac Purrington, owner of Apple Spice Junction and a member of the vestry and café project team, has created thorough profit and loss projections; we believe that the café will begin to generate revenue in its sixth month of operation and recover its initial losses by early in the second year.

In April, Baskervill's design was submitted to three contractors for bidding. All three bids returned significantly higher than the \$150,000 construction budget the project team had targeted. However, the project team saw particular promise in the proposal from Method Woodworking and asked them to employ value engineering wherever possible, focus on our priorities (infrastructure, the floor, the food service area, and elimination of one bathroom for additional space), and return to us with a \$150,000 proposal that would allow us to open in the fall, while leaving the door open for future upgrades.

The project team was pleased with Method's modified, \$150,000 proposal. It will be a simpler and more conservative version of the design Baskervill created, but we believe it will still be the kind of beautiful space that St. Stephen's is known for and can be proud of.

VESTRY APPROVAL AND FUNDING

On May 16, the vestry passed a motion to move forward with Method's proposal, contingent upon raising an additional \$35,000 by May 30. At that point, \$90,000 had been raised for construction, beyond the initial gift of \$30,000, leaving a gap of \$70,000 (\$60,000 in construction costs and \$10,000 in startup costs). The vestry agreed that if \$35,000 were raised within two weeks, the remaining \$35,000 could be borrowed from the reserve fund, to be paid back through a combination of revenue and additional fundraising.

Thanks to your generosity, we met and exceeded that goal. Now construction is set to begin this summer as we work towards launching this new community ministry in the fall. (We are still working towards lowering or eliminating the amount we need to borrow.)

As the director of family ministries, I am especially excited for our corner of Grove and Three Chopt to become a gathering place for young people—a destination before and after school, a place to study and a place to unwind. The opportunity for frequent, casual interaction will do wonders for our ministry, deepening our children's connections with their youth ministers, with each other, and with this sacred place.

And it will do the same for adults, too—members of St. Stephen's and preschool families, people from the



By Michael Sweeney

neighborhood and surrounding schools, and the steady stream of people who visit the church every day for worship, Bible studies, classes, recovery groups, the farmers market, May Fair House and the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's.

New relationships will be born through this common space, the fabric of our community will be strengthened, and we will be more empowered than ever to go forth and do God's work in the world. ❀

WHAT WILL BE SERVED IN THE CAFÉ?

The café will serve primarily pre-packaged foods, purchased wholesale from Ellwood Thompson's, with an emphasis on healthy, locally sourced fare. This will include sandwiches, wraps, and salads made by Ellwood Thompson's; breakfast foods, bottled drinks, and snacks. Coffee and smoothies (fruit and green) will be prepared onsite.

WHAT HOURS WILL THE CAFÉ BE OPEN?

The projected hours of food service are Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. and Saturday-Sunday, 7:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. The café would also be open as a gathering space any time the church building is open. Free Wi-Fi will be available at all times.

WHO WILL WORK IN THE CAFÉ?

The café will be managed by a full-time staff person with experience in café management. The manager will be supported by a café staff of two to three part-time employees and volunteers from the community. The cost of this staffing will be covered by revenue from the café. Members of St. Stephen's family ministry staff will be present in the café space every day after school, not as café staff, but to connect with youth and other members of the community.

HOW WILL THE CAFÉ BE PROMOTED?

Because the café is to be a ministry, not a business, it will be advertised internally and by word of mouth only. This does, however, include St. Stephen's Preschool and the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's. Also, tables with umbrellas on the Three Chopt patio of the café will help to attract joggers, dog walkers, and other passersby. ❀

Being together

(though not always on Sunday)

One significant trend within church life is the changing nature of congregating. That makes it increasingly important for congregations to experiment with new models and share what they are learning.

A pastoral leader recently observed that her congregation is recalibrating its understandings of active and committed participation in church life. In her setting, “frequent church attendance” is now about two times per month for members, three times per month for leaders. She said that their former expectations for congregational participation at the peak of summer vacation season are now their expectations year-round.

While the poll data seem a bit conflicted about how pervasive this pattern is within American church culture and there are certainly regional variations, it is safe to say that her congregation is not the only one to experience this change. Anecdotally, many congregations—especially medium-sized ones—are finding that fewer people attend and those that do are less consistent.

In her setting, this changed and changing nature of participation in the life of the congregation is sparking conversations about the nature of discipleship and commitment and the shape of Christian community today. The clergy and staff continue to teach newcomers about the importance of regular worship attendance and sharing in the life of the gathered community. They teach and preach that being together is an essential part of Christian faith and practice, a vital discipline for spiritual growth and maturation.

But they hear a now-familiar litany of conflicting obligations, ranging from Sunday morning soccer practice to work commitments to family travel. Members and leaders insist that they are deeply committed to the life of the church; they just won't be there on Sunday morning. In response, the congregation is reimagining everything from Christian formation and educational programs to the Sunday morning preaching calendar.

No longer do they plan and offer extended learning series, each dependent upon and building upon the previous weeks'. Offerings are now stand-alone opportunities, allowing participants to drop in and drop out. While the church uses the lectionary, which by its very nature makes the preaching of series-based sermons difficult, preachers now rotate much more frequently to ensure that each sermon stands alone. This means that if this is your first Sunday in four weeks, the sermon is as accessible as if you had been there every Sunday.

This changed participation is also sparking their institutional imagination for new and alternative ways of “being together.” They are creating opportunities for members and leaders to gather throughout the week in the church building and out in their community, both in person and online. It has them evaluating what is most formative and transformative about time spent together, and adjusting their ministries accordingly.

In a piece on deep trends affecting Christian institutions, Greg Jones and Nathan Jones write that one significant trend within American church life is the changing nature of congregating. While they highlighted multi-campus congregations and new monastic communities, congregations like my friend's or the Awakenings Movement in Detroit underscore other ways that congregating is changing.

If the most familiar models for ministry and congregational life are based on increasingly outdated assumptions about participation, congregations that are experimenting with new models are more important than ever, and how they share what they are learning will be crucial for the future of vibrant communities of faith. ❀

From www.faithandleadership.com, a learning resource for Christian leaders and their institutions published by Leadership Education at Duke Divinity School. Reprinted with permission.



By Nathan Kirkpatrick

Seven Days a Week

By Gary D. Jones

The world was changing pretty rapidly in the early 1960s when I was little. But one thing was certain every week: on Sunday morning, my little brother and sister and I would dress up and pile into the family station wagon to head to church. It's what everybody did in the 1950s and '60s—everybody I knew, anyway.

It's very different today. I don't know that it is necessarily worse; it's just different. Now, “active” parishioners sometimes do well to make it to their home church two times a month. Families are much more spread out now, so that weekend trips to see loved ones are much more common. Community events, including school athletic events, very frequently happen on Sundays, so that people are torn. Sundays are starting to feel like regular workdays for many people. Some go off to vacation homes on weekends. And sometimes, frankly, the pace of life in the 21st century and the emotional toll of information overload have so exhausted us that Sunday mornings are a time for many to collapse.

The article on this page from the “Faith and Leadership” publication of Duke University describes how the rapidly changing cultural situation has affected churches. Many churches have had a hard time adapting, and some are closing as a result. Others are responding creatively; they understand that people today are still very spiritual and still recognize their need to gather with others. Online spirituality just isn't enough for most of us; to grow in faith and love, we need to be together.

So churches like St. Stephen's continue to seek ways to respond to “the changing nature of congregating.” Sunday church attendance is still very important to people at St. Stephen's, but it will not surprise me if, more and more, our parishioners are found congregating in many other ways, as well: fellow jail ministers might choose to congregate in our church café on a Tuesday, for example; or young adults might congregate on a Saturday morning at our farmers market; still others might see their cooking team, their contemplative prayer group, or their needlepoint group as their weekday spiritual lifeline when Sunday worship just isn't an option.

I am deeply moved to see so many people in our church services on Sundays. Our average Sunday attendance continues to rise. But I am equally moved to see how spiritually vibrant St. Stephen's Church is every day of the week, with all sorts and conditions of parishioners adapting lovingly and faithfully to a changing world. ❀

DONORS TO THE CAFÉ PROJECT

Many thanks to the following people who had made pledges or donations to the café ministry as of June 1.

Anonymous café donor	Tom Cox & Penny Nash	Betsy Hunroe	Rob & Beth Norfleet	Matthew & Katy Schaaf
Chris & Valerie Abbott	Tom & Sterling Coulbourn	Chris & Margaret Hunter	Stewart & Donnan O'Keefe	Ed & Stacia Schoeffler
Tony Anthony	Rick & Shirley Crim	Hunter & Sheryl Jenkins	Marshall & Beth Orr	Luke & Meghan Semple
Janie Armfield	Mike & Dianne Del Bueno	Gary & Cherry Jones	Jim & Karen Orville	John & Martha Sherman
Bill & Mabel Baldwin	Blair & Preston Dillard	Brent & Anna King	Julian & Haley Otlely	Chris & Caroline Smith
Robert & Mary Elizabeth Barnes	James & Catherine Driscoll	Roger & Louise Kirby	Ruth Partlow	Richard & Stephanie Sowers
John & Patsy Barr	Keith & Susan Dull	James Klaus	Ben & Kim Phillips	Drew & Julee Spitzer
Larry & Sarah Bartenstein	Judith Dunn	Gene LeCouteur	John & Eddy Phillips	Charlie & Jeanne Stallings
John & Beverly Bates	Berkeley & Cheney Edmunds	Jim & Mary Leffler	Scott & Karen Phillips	Kevin & Maggie Sweeney
Peter & Jackie Bowles	Anna Evas	Patricia Lewis	Cotes & Helen Pinckney	Michael Sweeney & Briget Ganske
Caroline Brandt	Bobby & Betsy Fauntleroy	Stephen & Georganne Long	Paul & Ruth Prideaux	Matt & Janet Thompson
Allen & Sydney Broaddus	Wortie & Courtney Ferrell	Shane & Sarah Maley	Bobby & Martha Proutt	Chip & Betsy Tompkins
Orran & Ellen Brown	Greg & Corrine Ganske	Michael & Kara Mann	Mac & Dale Purrington	Rogers & Josie Toms
Paul & Gere Brown	Ruth Garrett	Justin & Megan Mariott	Andrea Rahal	Durwood & Deborah Usry
Mary Brydon	Richard & Amanda Gilbert	Gary & Brenda McDowell	Malcolm & Olivia Randolph	Fleet & Elizabeth Wallace
J.B. Burtch	Thomas & Missy Goode	Mac & Anne McElroy	Bruce & Taylor Raquet	Linda Walter
Tim & Christina Call	Lawrence & Freddie Gray	Keith & Marty McMullin	Ben & Susie Rawles	Travis & Shannon Weisleder
Tom & Sandy Capps	Ashby & Lori Hackney	Jim & Alice Meadows	Christopher & Julie Ratchford	David & Laura Wilkinson
Cabell & Marion Chenault	Dick & Bonny Hamrick	Craig & Claudia Merritt	Gary & Jennifer Richard	David & Karen Wise
Dixon & Kate Roy Christian	Braxton & Katja Hill	Richard & Mollie Mitchell	Penn & Laurie Rogers	Wesley & Elise Wright
Cole & Macon Clarkson	Mac & Joan Hines	Michael & Katherine Mueller	Jimmy & Lane Sanderson	
Richard & Kay Clary	Rick & Molly Hood	Lee & Sarah Mumford	David & Helen Sarrett	

Summer at St. Stephen's

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Saturday

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 5:30 p.m. in Palmer Hall Chapel

Sunday

Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m. in the church

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 10 a.m. in the church

Celtic Evensong and Communion, 5:30 p.m. in the church

Compline, 8 p.m. in the church

Second Saturdays Centering Prayer continues through the summer on the second Saturday of each month, 9-11 a.m. in Room 14.

The daily services of **Morning Prayer and Communion** (8:10 a.m.) and **Evensong** (5:30 p.m.) continue Monday through Friday.

The regular Sunday schedule of services, including the Palmer Hall service at 9, resume September 10, "Rally Day." Sunday school, the Sunday Forum and other educational offerings return Sunday, September 17.

The May Fair House is closed for the summer and will re-open September 12, the Tuesday after Labor Day at 10 a.m. **Wonderful Wednesdays** suppers resume September 20.

FOR CHILDREN

Vacation Bible School | July 10-14, 8:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m

St. Stephen's Vacation Bible School is open to children age 3 (potty trained) through rising third graders. Fourth and fifth graders will have their own program led by Michael Sweeney. Children and youth in grades 6-12 (and beyond) are encouraged to participate as volunteers. Register your children, and sign up to volunteer, at ststephensRVA.org/vbs. See article, page 8.

FOR YOUTH

Each summer, St. Stephen's youth have the opportunity to take part in a week-long mission trip. This year we are doing something a bit different: it's an immersive local experience designed to help young people gain a deeper understanding of their community. *Read more on page 7.*



ALL AGES

Parish Retreat at Shrine Mont

June 23-25

Led by the Rev. Steve McGehee and Sarah-Keel Crews

This weekend, for individuals, couples, and families, offers large and small group reflection time as well as plenty of time to relax, swim, hike, read, nap, explore, and to be with family and friends. Registration has closed, but if you want to go and you haven't made a reservation, please check with Sarah-Keel to see if there have been cancellations.

GROUPS, CLASSES, AND RETREATS

While most Emmaus Groups and other small groups take a break in the summer, some offerings continue, and others are special "summer-only" events. They include the following:

Contemplative Prayer | No registration or experience needed

Tuesdays at 8:45 a.m. in the Lounge; led by Millie Cain

This group gathers and sits together in silence. They have a short walking meditation and then a contemplative dialogue. They close with silence.



Briget Ganske photos

Icon workshop

Thursday Bible Study | No registration needed

Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.; led by Gene LeCouteur

This weekly group, open to all, focuses on specific books of the Bible.

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training | July 31-August 4, August 7-11

This offering is for adults who want to go deeper in their spiritual lives about what it means to "be like little children." Some will decide to serve as "catechists" (guides) for the young children who participate in our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd offering on Sunday mornings. Others may not—but all are welcome and all will benefit. *See page 8 for more information, or visit our Web site, ststephensRVA.org/levelone.*

Icon Writing Workshop | July 23-28, taught by Suzanne Schleck

This workshop will take place for the sixth year in a row this August. Instructor Suzanne Schleck will return to guide students in "writing" these religious works of art using the traditional materials of egg tempera and gold leaf on wooden panels. The workshop is full, but if you have not reserved a spot and you are interested in participating, call the parish office at 804.288.2867 to be placed on a waiting list.

PARISH AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

Holy Baptism | Saturday, July 8,

and Saturday, August 12, 10:30

a.m., main church

Saturday baptism services are offered several times each year, including twice this summer. Please contact Gene LeCouteur in the parish office if you would like to be baptized or have your child baptized. (There is also a Saturday baptism service offered September 30, if neither of these summer dates works for your family.)

Sunday Community Suppers |

6:30 p.m., year-round

These suppers have become an integral part of the Sunday evening experience, and an important form of hospitality for the entire community, including those for whom this may be the only meal they can rely on all week. This is part of our outreach to the larger community, and is a symbol of our church's ministry to feed all who are hungry. This summer, we are also increasing our efforts to make this a family-friendly event, with games on the church lawn for children, and the addition of grilled hot dogs to the menu. *Read more on page 5.*

Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's | Saturdays, 8 a.m.-noon

In keeping with our commitment to environmental stewardship, wellness, and outreach to the community, St. Stephen's Church hosts a farmers market every Saturday. Now in its ninth season, the market hosts a wonderful array of vendors offering locally produced seasonal vegetables, fruit, herbs, eggs, poultry, beef, pork, pasta and other foods. In addition, the market features local artisans, locally roasted coffee, and much more. *See page 5.* ❀



Sunday Community Suppers move outdoors

New offerings for kids: hot dogs and games on the lawn



Briget Ganske

Sunday Community Suppers have become a regular fixture at St. Stephen's—and those who frequent this offering look forward to the warmer months when it moves outdoors and we fire up the grill. The promise of an abundance of fresh ingredients from our farmers market, along with later sunsets, make these meals a special treat in the summer.

This year we will also have games on the lawn, and we're adding hot dogs to the menu of fresh, healthy fare, to make this weekly event more family-friendly than ever.

If it rains, the dinners still take place; we just move into the Fellowship Hall.

Sunday Community Suppers begin at about 6:30 p.m., between Celtic Evensong and Communion (5:30 p.m.) and Compline (8 p.m.).

Everyone is welcome at these meals, which are part of our food and wellness ministries: those who attend the Celtic service or Compline or both, those who just want the fellowship of a shared meal, those who can afford to donate money for that meal and those who cannot, those who are members of St. Stephen's, and those who might simply have noticed this weekly event as they walked or drove down Grove Avenue.

Sunday Community Suppers depend almost entirely on volunteers who come to the kitchen around 3:00 in the afternoon to begin preparation—peeling, chopping, mixing—and continue to help with kitchen clean-up afterwards. Our sextons handle the tables and chairs. This is a great opportunity for a group (your family, your friends, your Emmaus group or other small group) to offer your time and talent as a service project or just to spend time together on this labor of love. But you don't have to have a group to volunteer—there's always room for one more in the kitchen. Staff prepare menus and shop for food, and our Sunday supper coordinator, Ben Nelson, organizes and directs the volunteers. We have a sign-up board near the buffet table every Sunday night so that you can let us know when you are coming to help.

No reservations are needed to attend the dinner, which is donation-based. The idea is for this community meal to be available to all, regardless of financial circumstances. If you are able to pay for your meal, please do—but also know that you are welcome in any case. If you are in a position to give a bit more to cover a meal for someone who is not able to give, your generosity helps us keep this practice going.

For more information, contact Ben Nelson or Penny Nash in the parish office, 804.288.2867. ❀

In its ninth year, the market is stronger than ever



Sarah Bartenstein

In its ninth year of operation, the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's is enjoying greater participation by vendors and patrons than ever, and a growing reputation as a "destination" market. In fact, in its annual Best of Virginia issue, Virginia Living magazine named it one of the top three markets in central Virginia.

The market is open every Saturday, rain or shine, from 8 a.m. until noon. (Hours change in the late fall when early morning is dark—then the market opens at 9.) Summer is high season for the market, with berries, melons, tomatoes, beans, and many other local, seasonal products.

Eggs, meats, poultry, and seafood are also available, along with bread and other baked goods, prepared foods, dog treats, crafts, and much more. Live music provides a festive atmosphere, along with café tables and chairs where you can enjoy a cup of coffee, a freshly-squeezed limeade, or other treats. We've added colorful umbrellas to the café tables this year.

We have added a coffee concession, as well. Though we have had coffee vendors in the past, this summer we're offering our own blend, freshly brewed, as well as a new product, cold-brewed coffee (known for its especially smooth, rich flavor).

Volunteers are needed at the market every Saturday. One- to two-hour shifts are available that involve setting up before or cleaning up after the market; assisting vendors; serving coffee; or greeting people at the welcome table. Volunteers always have time to do their own market shopping, as well. You can volunteer once a month, once a week, or whatever your schedule allows. Please contact Gene LeCouteur in the parish office to learn more about volunteering and how to get on the schedule, glecouteur@ststephensRVA.org, or 804.288.2867.

STAFF CHANGES

The current vitality of the market is thanks in part to Kate Ruby, the market's manager for the past five years. In April, Kate decided to step down from her post. Fortunately, we have experienced leadership in place that means we are able to continue the wonderful experience our vendors and patrons have come to expect. Gene LeCouteur—one of the founders of the market—is acting manager, and Kyle Dosier continues as assistant manager. A project team composed of parishioners, parish staff, vestry members and vendors works with them to ensure the ongoing health of the market.

We are grateful to Kate for all she did for this crucial community-wide ministry, including expanding the number and range of vendors at the market, while focusing on the main reason that people come to a market like ours: for healthy, local, seasonal foods. Her commitment to supporting local farmers and producers is well-known in the region and enhanced our market. The winter market took off under her stewardship, and providing such a robust weekly offering in the coldest months is another way we stand out from the crowd.

While Kate was a champion of farmers and other vendors, she was also committed to improving the shopping experience for our patrons, and took steps to insure that vendor participation was consistent and predictable for our customers. We are deeply grateful to Kate for all her efforts.

Please join us this Saturday and every Saturday, and remember that volunteering at the market is a wonderful way to get to know other parishioners, our neighbors, and our wonderful farmers and vendors. ❀



Sarah Bartenstein

Seniors reflect on growing up at St. Stephen's

Allie, Charlotte, Anthony, Thomas, Mary, Michael, and Lucy gather after their Forum program.

On Sunday, April 30, members of the class of 2017 spoke in the Sunday Forum about the ways growing up at St. Stephen's Church have affected them. Below are Michael Sweeney's reflections on this class, as well as brief excerpts from each of the seniors' eloquent presentations. You can listen to them in their entirety on our Web site (ststephensRVA.org/forumaudio).

MICHAEL SWEENEY

I'll be honest: I wasn't sure that I belonged here. In Richmond. At St. Stephen's. I'm a yankee. (But, to be clear, a Red Sox fan.) I've lived most of my life just up the road from the corporate headquarters of Yankee Candle: "the Scenter of the Universe."

The first time I visited Richmond—or even Virginia—was my job interview here. It was July and there were flowering trees in full bloom. I asked what they were called but forgot the name as soon as I heard it because it was two words long and I was nervous. I'd grown up in a church whose entire congregation was smaller than at least five of the six Sunday services at St. Stephen's. In fact, the entire population of Greenfield, Massachusetts, is only about four St. Stephenses.

And somewhere not too far back in mind lurked the memory of the only other time I'd moved for a job: my shorter-than-it-was-supposed-to-be-but-not-nearly-short-enough stint as an English teacher in Mexico City, where I was greeted at the airport by a man holding a piece of ruled notebook paper with "Myke Sweeny" (which, no, is not my name) written in great haste.

So it meant more to me than I realized at the time—my very first Sunday morning in Richmond—when Charlotte Thornton, about to begin the 8th grade, welcomed me to St. Stephen's. She and her mother, Kemper, were stationed as greeters inside the Somerset parking lot entrance. There was no sign announcing my arrival, no fanfare, just the same deeply loving welcome that I'm sure greeted every person who walked through the door that morning. Though Charlotte and I had never met, it was as if she recognized me; such was the brightness of her smile, the enthusiasm of her greeting. I was sure then that I belonged here, and I haven't doubted it since.

This story is only one of the many that I could tell about each member of the class of 2017. This special group of graduates have enriched—and will continue to enrich—our lives in numerous ways. Twenty-two have served as acolytes. Eighteen have participated in St. Stephen's trips (to California, the Dominican Republic, New York City, Shrine Mont, and Wintergreen). Countless more have participated in weekly Bible studies, served the wider community through our outreach partners, and, of course, greeted us as we arrive at church on Sunday morning.

Most of all, we've been blessed by the simple presence of these young adults in our midst. Thanks to them, we have recognized Christ more deeply in ourselves and in one another. Now we send the class of 2017 forth on exciting new journeys with our gratitude and prayers, and we look forward to welcoming them home often, to this place where they will always belong.

THOMAS BRANCH

When I think of Palmer Hall, I think of the late Rev. David Anderson. He had a way with all of us kids that at least made me feel like he understood me and actually enjoyed being with us. My Great Uncle Read died when I was 8 years old. Reverend Anderson was the officiant at the family graveside service and called me forward to assist him in the service. He asked me to hold his Bible as he read scripture and to help to place the fresh dirt symbolically on the casket. He seemed to know that this simple moment would be a special memory that I would treasure about Uncle Read and help me in my understanding of death.

ALLIE DOCKUM

It wasn't until I entered high school, that we came to be members of St. Stephen's.

Despite being a little winded after all the pew aerobics, I decided that I liked this new church. I soon began going to some of the Kairos meetings and when I was in 10th grade I was confirmed... Prior to that moment, my faith had always been something that was told to me, but the confirmation classes allowed me to formulate my own set of beliefs. They encouraged discussion, raised questions and often provided some sort of reasoning behind any conclusions I formed. That was something that I had never been exposed to before. No matter what questions I raised, the youth group, led by Michael Sweeney, never once made me feel as though I stood out or that I did not belong.

MARY OTTLEY

Sometimes, in this world, goodness is difficult to see. A wise friend of mine once told me it takes 15 seconds to truly register the beauty of anything. Since then, I work to allow myself 15 seconds every time I see or hear something beautiful. There are so many instances the busy world will make me miss if I let myself get caught up in the hustle and bustle surrounding me. I want to feel and hold on to the elegance of a baby laughing as his mother pushes him in a stroller, birds chirping as I walk to my first class of the morning, finishing the last fold of a paper crane.

CHARLOTTE THORNTON

The seven days I spent in the Dominican Republic deeply affected me. Since I returned to my home in Richmond, I have had a different outlook on life. I try to be in the moment, to listen to others, and to smile more. I try to convey simple signs of affection and kindness like the Dominicans showed me, as this is an important aspect of the Dominican culture. I am going to work to make kindness a part of my culture too. The friendliness of the Dominicans and the love they showed me, even as a complete stranger...will stick with me forever. I hope someday I will return to *mi familia* in the Dominican Republic and be reminded, once again, of the magic of kindness.

ANTHONY VINSON

Growing up, I was not consulted about attending church. According to my parents I was coming one way or another. Palmer Hall taught me how to tell time, because I would stare at the clock anxiously awaiting church to be over. I always knew that once communion came I was in the home stretch. Now, as a senior in the church, I enjoy the service and try to learn as much as possible. I am very appreciative of my parents for making me sit through the Palmer Hall service and Sunday school when I had no desire to attend. The church has brought me closer to God and blessed me with this wonderful congregation. The adults in the church have helped me become the person I am today.

LUCY WALLACE

I've attended St. Stephen's as long as I can remember, and in those years I've done everything from singing in the Palmer Hall Choir and Virginia Girls Choir, to going to Shrine Mont and Wintergreen with youth groups, to acolyting with a great group of friends. However, my most profound spiritual moments have been with a group of fewer than 10 kids as we sit and talk about how God works in our lives over doughnuts every Wednesday. The group has been there for me at my low moments, like when my grandmother died, and at my high ones, like when I decided where I will attend college next year (wahoowa!). In turn, I have celebrated Michael's new son Emmett, sat with Tolly Maloney after her dad passed away, and heard hilarious stories every single week from Helen Wallace. Simply by showing up and eating doughnuts with me, these people have been the foundation of my relationship with God. ❀

Anna Julia Cooper School grads build on early success

In last fall's edition of **Seasons of the Spirit**, we published an article about Philip Robinson who had been mentored at Anna Julia Cooper School by St. Stephen's parishioner Cotesworth Pinckney and went on to attend Christchurch School, a diocesan school on the Rappahannock River. This spring Cotes conveyed the wonderful news that Philip had won the Jamie Riley Memorial Scholarship at Christchurch. In his presentation of the award, Coach Edward Homer said of Philip that, like the student in whose memory the scholarship was established, "All his coaches love him. His scope of friends here is as wide as the mouth of our river. He is at ease with all his schoolmates and he is incredibly loyal to his team." The coach continued, "He plays hard for three seasons, and he is already irreplaceable in football, basketball, and lacrosse. He loves to play the game and he genuinely puts his teammates first."

A mentee of parishioner Brenda McDowell, Victoria Buskey, entered Anna Julia Cooper with its first class; she and her peers are just completing their first year of college. As a freshman at Virginia State University, Victoria made the Dean's List, and is spending the summer in Tucson, Arizona, working with a faculty member and other students on a study of an endangered lizard. Victoria is in a pre-med program and aspires to be a pediatric oncologist, inspired by



Philip photographed at Christchurch School last year.

her own struggle with serious illness. This Richmond Community High School graduate gave back to Anna Julia Cooper—she tutored a student there—and volunteered at the Richmond Children's Museum when she was still in high school. She and Brenda stay in touch—they've had lunch together a couple of times and text one another weekly. And Brenda has sent Victoria the kind of mail most prized by college students: a care package.

Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School is an independent, faith-based middle school which was founded in part by St. Stephen's Church, and receives ongoing financial and volunteer support from this parish. The school provides full tuition scholarships to fourth through eighth grade students of limited resources in Richmond's East End. Its graduates go on to attend honors programs in local public high schools, or independent schools, as Philip has; many, like Victoria, are now attending four-year colleges, universities, and service academies. They are just two examples of the impact this school, and dedicated mentors like Cotes and Brenda, can have on a student's life. If you would like to volunteer in any of our East End partnerships—with Anna Julia Cooper School, the Peter Paul Development Center, or Fairfield Elementary School—please contact Deb Lawrence in the parish office, dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org, or 804.288.2867. ❀



Michael Sweeney

Youth take local mission trip this summer

You've heard of a staycation, right? You may even have taken one—a vacation that takes place at home.

This summer, instead of getting on a plane to go someplace for a mission trip, St. Stephen's youth will stay right here in Richmond for an overnight, immersive trip in which they will work with a variety of outreach partners, focusing on those in the East End: Anna Julia Cooper School, Child Savers, Peter Paul Development Center, and Shalom Farms.

The goal of the trip is not only to serve our community but to better know our city—its history, its inhabitants, the challenges we face, and how those challenges relate to each other. We'll learn, for example, about the creation of Richmond's public housing, and how that connects to issues like poverty, the criminal justice system, and inadequate access to education, employment, health services, and healthy food.

After spending the first five nights at Richmond Hill and Pocahontas State Park, the group will return to St. Stephen's for the final night and assist in our weekly food pantry distribution, with a new understanding of this ministry's significance and how our work and prayer at St. Stephen's fit into the wider fabric of our community. ❀

Big Boss Combo returns to Bluegrass Bash

Back-to-back outreach fundraisers include annual golf tournament



Big Boss Combo

For the past four years, St. Stephen's has kicked off the fall with two events designed to offer fun and fellowship for the entire community while raising additional funds for outreach. We've got many of the details nailed down for this September's events, so it's time to mark your calendars and start talking them up to friends, neighbors and colleagues. Everyone is welcome!

St. Stephen's Outreach Golf Tournament takes place **Thursday, September 14** at Meadowbrook Country Club, with lunch at noon and a 1:00 p.m. shotgun start. Why not arrange a foursome? You can also register individually and we will pair you with other players. It's an afternoon of fun and good-natured competition, all to support outreach. Even if you don't play, many sponsorship opportunities are available. Information and registration are available at ststephensRVA.org/golf and at the outreach table near the elevator and the parish office.

The very next day, **Friday, September 15**, the Bluegrass Bash returns, from 5 until 8 p.m. in the church parking lot. Back this fall is Big Boss Combo, who performed at the first of these annual events (in 2010, when the event was held in June). Also returning is local favorite Cook County Bluegrass. This is a fun-filled event with food trucks, local beer and wine, and free activities for kids. Help us spread the word about this community-wide offering. Ticket prices remain the same as last year: advance tickets are \$7 for children (ages 2-11), \$15 for ages 12 and up, and the family maximum is \$30. Be sure to reserve your tickets in advance, since prices go up the day of the event (\$10/\$20/\$40). You may purchase tickets in the parish office, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, or online at ststephensRVA.org/bluegrass. ❀

A summer opportunity for spiritual growth



Briget Ganske

Adults in last summer's course spent time in the atria.

St. Stephen's Church offers training opportunities each summer for those who might wish to serve as catechists in our unique Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. Even if you aren't sure that you'd like to take part in this ministry, the training is a deeply enriching experience for all who participate.

In this unique approach to the spiritual development of children, a catechist (CAT-eh-kist) is a guide who "wonders with the child" in the atrium, the specially-prepared sacred space where the child does his or her work.

Each course has two parts, and while both parts are needed in order to be credentialed to serve as a catechist, the parts need not be taken in order. In the course for those serving in a Level One atrium, Part 1 was offered last summer, and Part 2 will be offered this summer, July 31-August 4. If you missed Part 1, you can still take Part 2, and take Part 1 the next time it's offered.

For those interested in serving in a Level II atrium, Part 1 is offered August 7-11. Part 2 will be offered next summer.

We are fortunate to have Anna Hurdle, one of the finest trainers available, for these offerings, and people of various denominations and cities come to St. Stephen's to take the training. Tuition is waived for St. Stephen's parishioners who wish to serve in our atria. If you have questions, please contact Gene LeCouteur or Michael Sweeney in the parish office, or visit our Web site at ststephensRVA.org/catechesis. ❀

Each level has two training sections, which do not need to be taken in order.

Level One, Part 2 | July 31-August 4

Level Two, Part 1 | August 7-11

Kids will 'dig' Vacation Bible School this summer



This year's Vacation Bible School theme is "Digging for Treasure: Parables Revealed." Bible stories, games, crafts, snacks, and other activities will help us dig deeper to reveal the treasures in Jesus' parables. Children ages 3 (and potty trained) through grade 3 are invited to VBS, July 10-14; kids in grades 4 and 5 will have their own VBS experience led by Michael Sweeney. And those in grades 6 and up are invited to volunteer, along with adults. Volunteers will help lead music and worship, coordinate crafts, facilitate games, guide children from one area to another, prepare and serve snacks and assist with other tasks.

Registration is required at ststephensRVA.org/vbs. The cost is \$50 per child/week; for two children from the same family, the cost is \$75, and there is a \$100 family maximum. Do not allow tuition to be a barrier to your child's participation; contact Sarah-Keel Crews if this is an issue for your family.

If you have questions about Vacation Bible School at St. Stephen's, please contact Sarah-Keel, 804.288.2867, or skcrews@ststephensRVA.org, or Beth Thurmond, 804.787.3053, beththurmond@ymail.com. ❀

Summer volunteer opportunities for all ages

Even for those no longer on a school schedule, summer usually promises a less hectic pace and more time for family, for reading, for travel, for rest—and perhaps for volunteering. For those who *are* still on a school schedule, taking part in volunteer work is not only a nice thing to do—it can provide some helpful structure in the midst of weeks of free time, as well as community service hours.

St. Stephen's Church many ways to give of yourself, and the frequency of your participation is usually flexible, as your schedule allows. If you can do something every week, great; if you can come once a month, that's fine, too. Following are some suggestions. All activities are suitable for adults, most are suitable for high school students, and some can involve the entire family.

Staff contacts can be reached by phone at 288.2867, or by email using the first initial and last name @ststephensRVA.org.

FARMERS MARKET @ ST. STEPHEN'S

When: Saturdays between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m.

What's needed: volunteers to serve two-hour shifts for various tasks, including set-up; welcoming and providing information; walking through the market to find out what vendors might need, such as change, or a quick break to go to the rest room; clean-up; orientation is provided.

Contact: Gene LeCouteur [glecouteur]

MARKET GLEANING

When: Saturdays between 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m.

What's needed: gleaners roll a cart through the farmers market to collect donated produce, eggs, bread and other foods from vendors with unsold items, then take the donations to the food pantry in the basement.

Contact: Deb Lawrence [dllawrence]

FOOD PANTRY DISTRIBUTION

When: Mondays, 9-11 a.m. or 12:45-3:15 p.m.

What's needed: volunteers assemble bags of groceries before the pantry opens, then greet clients and hand out the bags during pantry distribution hours, 1-3 p.m. Choose between these two shifts.

Contact: Deb Lawrence [dllawrence]



Gene LeCouteur

SUNDAY COMMUNITY SUPPER PREPARATION

When: Sundays, 3 p.m. until 8 p.m.

What's needed: volunteers prepare supper in St. Stephen's kitchen with guidance and support from church staff members; they also set up, serve, and clean up with help from staff. Individuals or groups may volunteer.

Contact: Penny Nash [pnash]

MEAL PREP FOR SIDE BY SIDE

When: Third Tuesday of the month

What's needed: volunteers prepare and deliver suppers to Side by Side (formerly ROSMY). Delivery time is between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m.

Contact: Deb Lawrence [dllawrence]

PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER SUMMER INSTITUTE

When: July 5-August 25

What's needed: volunteers read with students during lunch weekdays at the Peter Paul Development Center and help with the day camp at Roslyn in August.

Contact: Deb Lawrence [dllawrence]

MATH CAMP AT ST. STEPHEN'S

When: 8:15-9:45 a.m., July 31-August 4

What's needed: volunteers (grades 9 and up) to help prepare and serve breakfast to Peter Paul students participating in the morning-long math camp.

Contact: Deb Lawrence [dllawrence]

DRIVERS FOR WESTMINSTER-CANTERBURY RESIDENTS

When: Sunday mornings, about four times per year

What's needed: drivers take one of St. Stephen's vans to Westminster-Canterbury to pick up residents for our Sunday morning service, and take them home after the service. When we are fully staffed with volunteer drivers, the commitment is about four times a year.

Contact: Betsy Lee [blee]

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

When: July 10-14, 8:30-12:00

What's needed: adults and youth (grades 6-12) to help in a variety of roles: teachers, classroom assistants, snack coordinators, and helpers with music, games, and arts and crafts. Ideally volunteers are able to help for the whole week, but partial week volunteers are welcome, too.

Contact: Sarah-Keel Crews [skcrews] ❀

Two new choirs added to groups for children and teens

St. Stephen's offers choirs for all ages. Our musical offerings for children and youth will include two new groups this fall.

PALMER HALL CHOIR

Grades 2-4

Rehearsals: Wednesdays 5:30-6:10

Sings 1-2 times per month at the 9:00 Palmer Hall Service

Children in the Palmer Hall Choir explore music fundamentals such as reading a musical line, singing and playing rhythms on rhythmic instruments, phrasing, dynamics, and learning a larger musical vocabulary through musical games. Greater focus is placed on singing technique, exploring different musical styles, and singing in two parts. Children continue to understand how their own unique gifts can be used in worship. This choir participates in the Children's Christmas Pageant, Christmas Eve Service, and the spring choir banquet. Directed by Dawn Childs

NEW! MIDDLE SCHOOL CHOIR

Grades 5-8

Rehearsals: TBA (either Wednesday evenings from 6:30-7:30 after Wonderful Wednesdays Supper, or Sunday mornings from 10:10-11:00)

Sings once a month in one of the three Sunday morning services

The Middle School Choir is a new addition to St. Stephen's children's and youth choirs and will begin in the fall of 2017. Choir members will learn to sing 2- to 3-part pieces in a variety of musical styles, focusing in-depth on using proper singing technique, all while expanding greater knowledge of music fundamentals. We will reflect on the texts and have discussions about their meaning and relevance in our lives and the world. In addition to singing on Sunday mornings, this choir will participate in Christmas caroling in December, the Christmas Eve service, and the spring choir banquet. Directed by Dawn Childs

VIRGINIA GIRLS CHOIR

Grades 5-12

Rehearsals: Wednesdays, 5:10-8 p.m., and Sundays before and after the morning service

Sings most Sundays in one of the morning services in the main church, leads Choral Evensong Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m., sings occasionally during Sunday evening Celtic Service (during academic year), and for special services, concerts and events

Founded in 2008, this auditioned choir attracts singers from across the greater Richmond area. Choristers work to sing with spirit and understanding in a variety



Virginia Girls Choir

Briget Ganske



Palmer Hall choirs

Nathan Childs

of musical styles, with the music of the Anglican tradition taking pride of place in their repertoire. They have performed under the direction of noted choir trainer Dr. Barry Rose, have performed with recording artist and composer Ana Hernández, and have recorded a Christmas CD, "An Unexpected Christmas." They are also featured on the Lessons and Carols program recorded and broadcast by WCVE public radio in 2015. New and returning members of the choir take part in choir camp, a day camp held at the church, in August. The choir often participates in special services and concerts with our adult choirs, gives concerts here and on the road, and sings for the Celtic Christmas service on Christmas Eve. Directed by Kerry Court; to apply, visit our Web site at ststephensRVA.org/VGC.

NEW! A CAPELLA CHOIR

Grades 9-12

This group will sing in the community. Rehearsals will take place Sunday afternoons (specific time TBA).

This city-wide, coed group will recruit the best singers from public and independent high schools throughout the area to sing contemporary collegiate style *a capella* music (think Pentatonix or groups heard on "The Sing-Off"). The first semester will be focused on learning the repertoire, and members will have the opportunity to learn choral arranging. This 16-person group is being formed by Kerry Court, who directs the Virginia Girls Choir as well as choral groups at St. Catherine's School. She will hold auditions in early fall. ❀

Hunger: a year-round challenge

St. Stephen's food and wellness ministries work together: our Saturday Farmers Market provides a way for local farmers and other vendors to earn their living while giving access to fresh, healthy food for market shoppers. Many of those vendors donate produce, eggs, meat, bread, and other fresh foods to our food pantry, which provides healthy groceries to clients of our food pantry who struggle to provide food for their families. Meanwhile, parishioners donate canned and boxed food to the pantry. On Sunday nights, parishioners, neighbors, and others share an evening meal that incorporates healthy ingredients purchased from farmers and other vendors at our farmers market. For some who attend this supper, it might be the only nourishing food they have all week. On Mondays, people in need queue up to receive the food that's been provided by donations from parishioners and market vendors.

People need food 365 days a year, not just when we are present to make a donation, or think to fill a special box for Thanksgiving or Christmas. And our food pantry—a crucial part of our food ministry—is sometimes strained in the summer months.

At a time of year when many of us are away for travel, time with family and friends, and other enjoyable pursuits, food pantry clients continue to need our help. School vacations present unique challenges to households affected by food insecurity. Children and youth who depend on free or reduced-price breakfasts

and lunches served in school cafeterias do not have access to those meals when classes are not in session, so that summer—an already-challenging time—becomes even more difficult for low-income families.

Meanwhile, because many of us who bring food on Sundays to stock the pantry are away at various points during the summer, the shelves can empty quickly. Here are some ways you can help us avoid this situation.

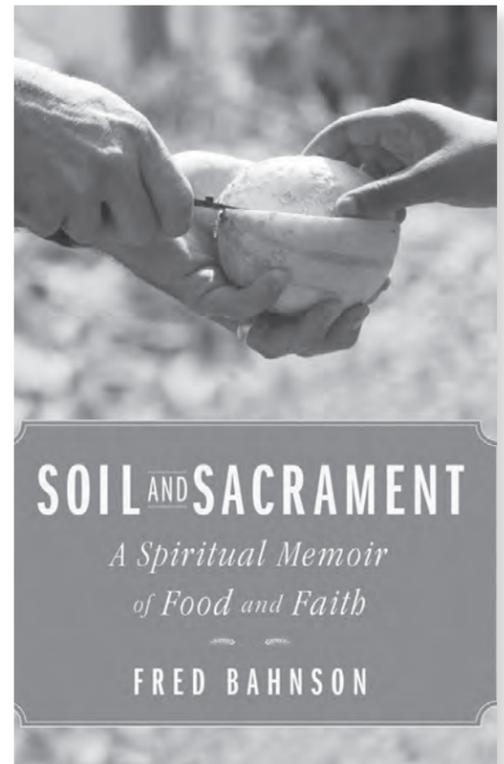
- If you will be away one Sunday (or more than one), please consider bringing extra stores of shelf-stable food before you leave. Consider protein such as peanut butter or tuna, as well as pasta, pasta sauce, canned fruit and vegetables, boxed macaroni and cheese, and healthy cereals (not pre-sweetened).
- Even if you won't be away, please consider bringing extra food to make up for the typical summer shortfall.
- If you have a garden, please bring produce donations. If at all possible, bring them on Sundays; since the distribution takes place on Mondays, bringing them much earlier means the produce could spoil.
- Please remember the fruit ministry, as well, and bring apples, oranges, and/or bananas on Sundays. ❀

Summer reading 2017: Gary's pick

By Gary D. Jones

Fred Bahnson's book, *Soil and Sacrament*, sounded interesting to me when I first saw it. People I trust—Parker Palmer, Rowan Williams—praised it effusively. Still, I hadn't considered this book as an option for my summer reading recommendation because I thought it was primarily about finding God in gardening. We have a lot of gardeners in the parish, but I wanted something with broader appeal. Fortunately, the author himself nudged me to read it, and I discovered that *Soil and Sacrament* is about much more. This beautifully written memoir is one of the most touching and engaging books I have read in a long time. It's about what it means to be human, and offers profound spiritual insights on the joys and challenges of living a Christian life in today's world. The colorful cast of characters will move you—it's hard not to love them—and when I read it, I periodically had to put the book down, close my eyes, and ponder all over again what makes for a good life.

Yes, gardeners will find much to love in *Soil and Sacrament*. So will young adults who are trying to balance work and family, as will our healing prayer ministers and jail ministers who have experienced Christ in vulnerable people on the margins of life. If you've ever been to the Society of St. John the Evangelist's monastery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, or wondered about the experience of monastic life, you will be drawn in by the author's chapter about his time at Mepkin Abbey in South Carolina. Those who have pondered with regret our society's tendency to segregate the elderly or the disabled as unneeded will be inspired. Anyone who has ever wanted to escape the messiness of life may well find the courage to embrace that messiness as the source of true meaning and joy. And if you've ever had an intimation that, in the end, a good life is all about relationships and love, however imperfectly we experience those, you will come away from reading this book with inspiration and newfound conviction about the possibility of cultivating such a life here and now. ❀



Fred Bahnson will be at St. Stephen's September 16-17. Pick up a copy of *Soil and Sacrament* to read now; when you buy books from the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's, you support our speakers series. Can't buy a book right now? We've got copies to lend. Just stop by the parish office.

Summer reading: staff picks

The rector selects a book each year to recommend to the parish as a summer read. Here are some additional staff picks for your consideration, once you've finished *Soil and Sacrament*. Some (though not all) are available in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's.



GENE LECOUEUR

The Beautiful Not Yet by Carrie Newcomer
Newcomer has a way of choosing just the right words to convey a feeling or situation. The title poem along with "Kindness," "A Shovel is a Prayer," and "Blessing" are touching and evocative. Here is a taste from the poem "Cups of Light." "You always arrive bringing light./ Carried in chipped pitchers,/ And dented buckets./ Sloshing all that luminous liquid/ Out like soapy water/ Washing down the muddy floorboards/ Of my weary or worried days." You will enjoy this collection of poetry and song lyrics over and over.

The Abundance by Annie Dillard
I am looking forward to reading Dillard's latest book of essays; I've loved her writing since I first read *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* 30 years ago. This collection includes gems from her career along with new essays. "*The Abundance* reminds us that Dillard's brand of 'novelized nonfiction' pioneered the form long before it came to be widely appreciated," reads the publisher's description. "Intense, vivid, and fearless, her work endows the true and seemingly ordinary aspects of life—a commuter chases snowball-throwing children through neighborhood streets, a teenager memorizes Rimbaud's poetry—with beauty and irony, inviting readers onto sweeping

landscapes, to join her in exploring the complexities of time and death, with a sense of humor: on one page, an eagle falls from the sky with a weasel attached to its throat; on another, a man walks into a bar."

STEVE MCGEHEE

24/6 by Matthew Sleeth, MD
This book is an engaging account of how to achieve "work-life balance" by honoring the Sabbath—what Sleeth calls "Stop Day"—and keeping it holy. Since "Sabbath" is the theme for our retreat at Shrine Mont this June, Sleeth's book is excellent preparation for our time together there, as well as a wonderful guide on how faith can inform healthy personal choices.

CLAUDIA MERRITT

The Lowland by Jhumpa Lahiri
This is a beautifully written story about family, secrets, abiding love, and loyalty. I liked it not only for the well-crafted story but also Lahiri's gift with prose.

The Quartet by Joseph J. Ellis
This non-fiction book is about George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison and their parts in crafting the U.S. Constitution.

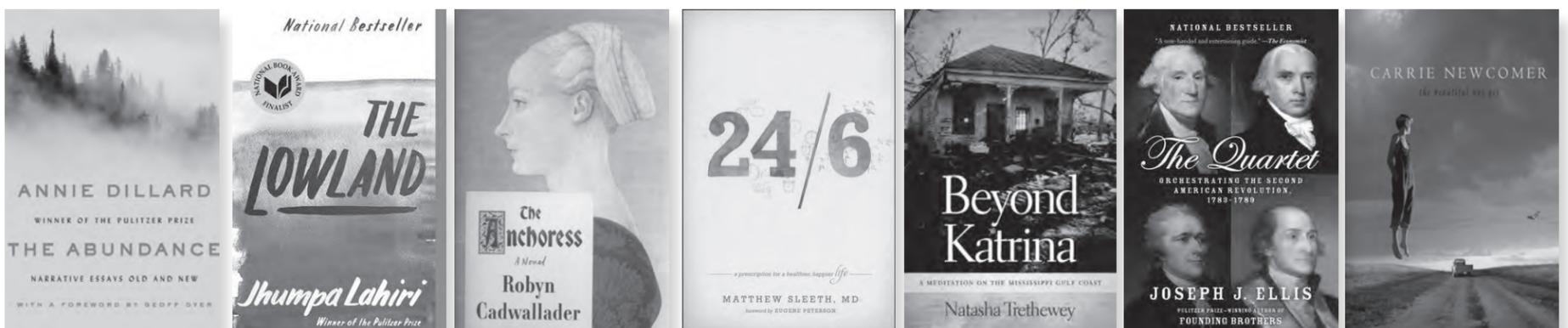
I appreciated its insight on how we got to be the nation we are today and how issues of the 18th century are still very present with us.

PENNY NASH

The anchoress by Robyn Cadwallader
This novel takes place in 13th century England and centers on a 17-year-old girl who chooses to have herself walled up in a small cell attached to a church (think Julian of Norwich). As the novel progresses, she begins wasting away, body and soul, and we begin to understand why she has chosen this life and what she must do to begin to faithfully live it. The novel is beautifully written and is both suspenseful and hopeful. It has some interesting things to say about gender, power, and community.

ALLISON SEAY

Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast by Natasha Trethewey
While I have long been a fan of Natasha Trethewey's poetry, I am less familiar with her prose. From what I understand, though, this book reads like a poem: a haunting and beautiful study, driven by memory and image, of the ways we attempt to repair what is damaged and recover what is lost. ❀



SATURDAY EVENING SERVICE OFFERS INTIMATE SETTING

Did you know that St. Stephen's Church offers a service of Holy Eucharist: Rite Two on Saturdays? The simple, intimate service takes place in Palmer Hall Chapel beginning at 5:30 p.m. every Saturday evening. It includes a brief homily and parts of the service are chanted, but there are no hymns. This 45-minute service continues year-round, including the summer months. ❀



Sarah Ferguson

Todd Culbertson (center, wearing bow tie), is surrounded by dancers and Richmond Ballet staff, including Brett Bonda (to Culbertson's right) and Stoner Winslett (to his left) at the reception where he received the award of appreciation from the ballet.

Parishioner uses 'bully pulpit' to elevate

Todd Culbertson honored by Richmond Ballet for his support of the arts

It's not surprising when editorial writers weigh in on matters of public policy, or when they endorse—or skewer—political figures. It seems less common—at least on the editorial page—to read commentary that calls us to recognize music, painting, dance, and different approaches to the divine as the foundations of our common humanity.



By Sarah Bartenstein

But this is an approach for which Todd Culbertson has become known during his years as editor of the editorial pages at the Richmond Times-Dispatch. Over the years, his editorials have regularly drawn on sources beyond the political realm for insights into the human condition.

Culbertson, a member of St. Stephen's Church since his baptism here in 2008, has announced that he will retire from the Times-Dispatch this summer.

"He has a deep interest in the influence of great artists, musicians, and theologians through the ages and around the world," says Gary Jones. "He has traveled the world to bring us reminders of the riches of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Lincoln Center; Compline at the Society of St. John the Evangelist, Morning Prayer at Harvard, and 'The Messiah' at the Hayden/Handel Society; performances of Bach, Mozart and Wagner in France and Austria; insights from a monastery in South Africa; and the refreshing balm of a good baseball game, oysters on the half shell, and a pint with friends – all the things that ennoble and lift the human spirit."

Perhaps it is because he has traveled so widely that he wants his community to know how fortunate we are to have what we do, here at home. He has seemed at times to be reminding us that the quality of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Richmond Ballet, the Richmond Symphony, and other arts and cultural institutions far surpass what might be expected in a city the size of Richmond.

In fact, in a note posted on the Times-Dispatch Web site in June 2015, Alex Nyerges, director of the VMFA, wrote, "Todd: You are Richmond's best cheerleader. Thanks for all you do to remind us what a great place we have to call home. It's our slice of heaven on earth, especially in the arts, all of them."

Recently, another Richmond arts institution decided to let Culbertson know how much they appreciate all he has done for the city and its arts community.

Following a May 13 performance by the Richmond Ballet at the Joyce Theater in New York City, the ballet presented Culbertson with an award of appreciation—recognition that took him completely by surprise.

In an interview, Brett Bonda, managing director of the ballet, reported that Stoner Winslett, the ballet's artistic director, ran into Culbertson in the grocery store after the two had decided to surprise the writer with this recognition. Through this chance meeting, Winslett learned that Culbertson planned to attend their upcoming New York performance. Armed with this information, ballet officials conspired to present the award to Culbertson in New York City. Bonda and his wife Annette met Culbertson at the Joyce, invited him to the reception following the performance, and—to guarantee his attendance—asked him to share an Uber ride with them.

Once there, they presented him with the Richmond Ballet Lifetime Achievement Award for the Support of Dance.

"He was so surprised," said Bonda.

"We have not bestowed this honor on many people," he continued, "so it really is an extreme honor when we do present it."

He added, "Todd has always been so knowledgeable and open to what the ballet does, from its work in the schools, to training, to performances. He's been such an advocate for the ballet. We wanted to thank him."

Culbertson's approach "shows the importance of the arts. Anyone who lives and breathes needs the arts," says Bonda. With all that is going on in the world, he says, "there needs to be some beauty out there."

The resolution accompanying a glass trophy for Culbertson read, in part, "Whereas, the bully pulpit of every newspaper is its editorial page, from which the editor delivers his homilies; and Whereas, some editors bloviate, others fulminate, and a precious few enlighten; and Whereas the Richmond Times-Dispatch was long blessed with a uniquely enlightened and enlightening Editorial Page Editor whose interests were catholic in scope, moderate in timbre and graceful in expression; and Whereas, high in this Editor's hierarchy of interests have been those artistic and spiritual endeavors that define civilization... Now, therefore, the President and Board of the Richmond Ballet have determined to present the Richmond Ballet Lifetime Achievement Award for Support of Dance to this same Editorial Page Editor, Todd Culbertson, in thanks for a career that included the arts within the scope of public life on which he comments, helped to bring Richmond Ballet the public stature it deserved, and thereby enriched us all."

Bonda, noting that the ballet's mission is to "awaken and uplift the human spirit through dance," said, "Someone like Todd understands that there's more out there than the negative news."

It seems that Culbertson, too, has been doing his part to awaken and uplift the human spirit. ❀

Former U.S. poet laureate to headline St. Stephen's poetry series

After an inaugural poetry series featuring several outstanding poets—capped by a standing-room-only reading and lecture by Jane Hirshfield—we are thrilled to announce that our 2017-18 series will feature Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Natasha Trethewey. Trethewey served two terms as the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States (2012-2014), and is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for her poetry. She will visit St. Stephen's on January 25, 2018.

Trethewey, who received her master's degree in English and creative writing from Hollins University, is the author of four collections of poetry, *Thrall* (2012), *Native Guard* (2006), for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, *Bellocq's Ophelia* (2002); and *Domestic Work* (2000) which was selected by Rita Dove as the winner of the inaugural Cave Canem Poetry Prize for the best first book by an African American poet and won both the 2001 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Book Prize and the 2001 Lillian Smith Award for Poetry. Her book of nonfiction, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, appeared in 2010. She is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. At Emory University she is Robert W. Woodruff Professor of English and Creative Writing. In 2012 she was named Poet Laureate of the State of Mississippi and in 2013 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. ❀

Other poets coming for our 2017-18 series include:

October 5, 2017: Gabriel Fried
November 2, 2017: Tarfia Faizullah
March 15, 2018: Molly McCully Brown
April 12, 2018: Neil Perry

Additional details about the 2017-18 poetry series will be published in the fall edition of **Seasons of the Spirit**.



Early fall speakers focus on stewardship of creation

The 2017-18 year will bring an exciting line-up of speakers, beginning with the author of the parish summer reading selection, *Soil and Sacrament*. We'll have more details about the complete schedule in the fall edition of **Seasons of the Spirit**, but here are some early fall dates to put on your calendar now. The first speakers in this series share a common focus on our relationship to, and stewardship of, God's created order.

Saturday, September 16 & Sunday, September 17

Fred Bahnson

Fred Bahnson is on the faculty at Wake Forest University School of Divinity where he directs the Food, Health, and Ecological Well-being Program. In addition to *Soil and Sacrament*, he is co-author of *Making Peace with the Land*. His essays have appeared in Harper's, Oxford American, Image, Orion, The Sun, the Washington Post, and *Best American Spiritual Writing 2007*. Fred's writing awards include a Pilgrimage Essay Award, a W.K. Kellogg Food & Community fellowship, and a North Carolina Artist fellowship in creative nonfiction from the NC Arts Council. He lives with his wife Elizabeth and their three sons in Brevard, North Carolina, and is a member of St. Philip's Episcopal Church.

On Saturday night, he will be joined by **Dr. Heber Brown** of Baltimore, who will tell the story of the Black Church Food Security Network, which was birthed in the Baltimore Uprising of 2015. The network assists historically African-American congregations in starting gardens on church-owned land and pairs churches with farmers to create a pipeline of fresh produce from soil to sanctuary. Following his talk, he and Bahnson will discuss how churches can use food to build the Beloved Community in their neighborhoods.



Thursday, October 19

John Philip Newell

John Philip, a familiar voice at St. Stephen's, is known for his expertise in the arena of Celtic spirituality. He will return this fall with a new focus: John Muir, the man considered by many to be the patron saint of American environmentalism. John Philip's presentation is titled "John Muir: Celtic Prophet of Ecological Consciousness & Action." Muir (1838 - 1914) has been described as the archetype of humanity's oneness with the earth. John Philip will explore the Celtic vision at the heart of Muir's spirituality and invite us to be part of the pregnant relationship between falling in love with the earth and protecting it.

The 2017-18 year will also bring **Denise Thomas-Brown** of the McShin Foundation, a member of St. Peter's, Church Hill who tells her own story of abuse, addiction and recovery; **Fr. Martin Laird**, author of *Into the Silent Land* and *A Sunlit Absence*, who will lead an Advent quiet day; **the Very Rev. Lucinda Laird**, dean of the American Cathedral in Paris on January 21; **Br. Luke Ditewig** of the Society of St. John the Evangelist who will lead a Lenten retreat; **the Rev. Becca Stevens**, director of Magdalene House and Thistle Farms, who will be accompanied by women from Magdalene who have experienced addiction, abuse, and sex trafficking and have transformed their lives; and former U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet **Natasha Trethewey** (see article above).



John Muir, considered the patron saint of American environmentalists.

Briget Ganske

By Francis M. Fritz



Briget Ganske

Serving in worship at St. Stephen's

Healing prayer ministry

Have you considered serving in our liturgies in any of the following ways?

- As a **reader**—reading the scripture from the lectern
- As an **intercessor**—leading the Prayers of the People
- As a **chalice bearer**—offering the cup of wine as people come forward to receive communion
- As a **Eucharistic visitor**—taking communion to those who are unable to be present at services
- As a **healing prayer minister**—praying with those who come forward to receive healing prayer during the Sunday evening Celtic service

Each of these ministries is carried out by lay people who have been identified, trained and prepared by the clergy, using the following timeline.

READERS, INTERCESSORS, AND CHALICE BEARERS

- Reminders of the need for new volunteers are published in January;
- Discernment and orientation take place in February;
- Training takes place in March and April (refresher training for those already serving is offered in the fall);

- Retiring servers complete their service April 30;
- New servers begin their ministries in May.

EUCCHARISTIC VISITORS

- Reminders of the need for new volunteers are published in September;
- Volunteers meet with clergy/engage in discernment in October;
- Orientation and training begin in November;
- New Eucharistic visitors begin in January.

HEALING PRAYER MINISTERS

- Reminders of the need for new volunteers are published in January;
- Workshop for current healing prayer ministers takes place in January;
- Discernment takes place in the spring;
- Healing prayer workshop is offered in the fall;
- New teams begin in October.

If you have questions about this process, or you would like to be considered for any of these roles, please be in touch with the Rev. Penny Nash, pnash@ststephensRVA.org or 804.288.2867. ❀

Weston Mathews called to Grace Church, the Plains

In the spring of 2014, the people of St. Stephen's learned that one of the new clergy joining our staff would be a young man who had just graduated from Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria and was soon to be ordained deacon in his home diocese, Southwestern Virginia. Weston Mathews and his wife Hannah—a PhD candidate at the University of Virginia—arrived in our community in that summer. In December, Weston was ordained to the priesthood along with Gene LeCouteur in a diocesan service at St. Paul's, Richmond.

This spring, Weston answered another call: that of Grace Church, the Plains (near Warrenton, Virginia) to serve as their rector. Weston and Hannah's last Sunday here was May 14, and he will begin his new ministry this summer.

In a letter to the parish, Weston wrote, "My ministry at St. Stephen's has been a profound blessing to me over nearly three years, and I hope to all of you as well. When I arrived in July of 2014 as a newly ordained deacon and recent graduate of Virginia Theological Seminary, your overwhelming love and embrace of my wife Hannah and me made learning what it means to be a parish priest in a large, vibrant parish feel more like getting to know an extended family. Working with the most talented staff of any Episcopal parish in the United States made things even better!"



Briget Ganske

He continued, "During our time together we have celebrated countless sacraments, shared many, many meals, welcomed new infants, celebrated weddings, buried friends, baptized adults and children, and shared in the joys and challenges of a common life together. We've prayed, laughed, cried and found joy together in so many different places: in your homes, in hospitals, at Westminster Canterbury and Cedarfield, in Palmer Hall, at Morning Prayer and Evensong in Holy Spirit Chapel, at Shrine Mont,

on street corners, on hikes at Powhatan State Park, and at Celtic Evensong by candlelight. We've learned from each other in unforgettable Inquirers Classes, retreats and countless "Thirdsdays" for young adults, built community with incarcerated women and men at the Richmond City Jail, connected with our interfaith sisters and brothers, served LGBTQ+ youth at Side by Side (formerly ROSMY) and continue to bear witness to the beauty of God's creation here in Richmond and beyond."

"You all have truly blessed me. I have learned to be a priest serving with you. Witnessing your faith has helped me grow in my own."

Gary noted that Weston "has been exemplary in so many ways. His energy, faithfulness, and intelligence have inspired us. His deep commitment to those who are vulnerable, marginalized, or poor has strengthened our church's witness in the larger community and started important conversations in the parish about the intersection of faith and social action. As a newly ordained clergy person, Weston has been eager to learn all facets of parish ministry, and he embraced his myriad responsibilities at St. Stephen's as opportunities for personal and professional growth... Weston has shown us that he has a pastor's heart. He has loved you faithfully; and nothing energized Weston more than visiting parishioners in their homes, in the hospital, in his office, or at a coffee shop, offering prayer, counsel, a listening ear, and the assurance of God's love. We are going to miss Weston and his extraordinarily gifted and supportive wife, Hannah. I'm sorry to see them go, but I am also very happy for them."

Godspeed, Weston and Hannah! ❀



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER AT ST. STEPHEN'S

Holy Week and Easter services in and around the church included Palm Sunday (top left and above left), with Evie the Donkey making her annual appearance, and Good Friday Stations of the Cross led by St. Stephen's youth (top right). The newly-restored altar in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit (above, right) was back in place. St. Stephen's welcomed nearly 3,000 people to our Easter services. Photos by Sarah Bartenstein



BISHOP GOFF CONFIRMS MORE THAN 70

Sunday, May 21, was a joyful day at St. Stephen's Church. Fifty-one youth and 21 adults were confirmed, received into the Episcopal Church, or reaffirmed in their faith during the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services. The Rt. Rev. Susan E. Goff, the Diocese of Virginia's bishop suffragan, was the celebrant and preacher, and performed the laying on of hands; her sermon is available on the sermons page of our Web site. She remarked later that she'd been deeply moved by how engaged the confirmands were. Adult confirmands were prepared for this rite by the Rev. Weston Mathews, the Rev. Steve McGehee, and the Rev. Gary Jones. Youth were prepared by Michael Sweeney and several adult volunteer teachers and mentors. Janet Allen and Michael coordinated the confirmands before and during the service. Photos by Briget Ganske



Legacy Profile

Thomas and Missy Goode

Thomas and Missy are involved in outreach and other ministries at St. Stephen's. Their children are Joe and Emmy.



WHEN DID YOU JOIN ST. STEPHEN'S?

Missy has been here her entire life; Thomas came in 1987.

WHAT SERVICE DO YOU ATTEND MOST REGULARLY?

9:00 a.m. Sunday

WHEN YOU RECOMMEND ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT YOUR PARISH?

There are opportunities to grow in your faith in many ways at St. Stephen's.

WHAT, TO YOU, IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE MINISTRY OF ST. STEPHEN'S?

The recognition that there is no one form of worship or community service that fits all people. At St. Stephen's, you can find what works for your personal faith journey.

WHAT ARE/HAVE BEEN THE MOST MEANINGFUL WAYS YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED IN THIS PARISH?

Seeing our children grow up in a church where they gain a spiritual foundation.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU TO BE PART OF THE LEGACY SOCIETY?

St. Stephen's Church has been an important part of our family in good times and challenging times. It represents a much-needed place of worship in a vastly changing world.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO OTHERS ABOUT JOINING THE LEGACY SOCIETY?

One of the best things we can do is to assure that St. Stephen's is around long after we are gone.

The Legacy Society and the endowment can play a big part in that effort. ❀



ST. STEPHEN'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Anyone can join the Legacy Society of St. Stephen's Church, ensure the future of this parish, and enjoy the benefits of being a member of the society. This opportunity is not limited to people with great material wealth nor to those of any particular age. To learn more, visit ststephensRVA.org/legacy; pick up a Legacy Society booklet in the parish house; or contact John Sherman, chairman, 804.382.5109, or Janet Allen in the parish office, 804.288.2867.

Planned Giving vehicle: a gift annuity

The Trustees of the Funds of the Diocese of Virginia manage about \$140 million for churches throughout our diocese, including St. Stephen's Endowment. The Trustees of the Funds have established a vehicle for planned giving that is extremely attractive and might be a good way for you to include your church in your estate plans: charitable gift annuities with attractive incomes and tax considerations, and minimal fees.

You can fund an annuity from \$5,000 to \$100,000 with cash or appreciated securities, and you may be eligible to receive certain tax benefits. You can claim a charitable contribution for part of the gift, reduce capital gains if stock is donated, and receive the majority of the income payment as tax-free income. Rates determining the cash flow are determined by age. For example, using current annuity rates, someone age 71 can receive a 5.1 percent annuity payment; a 74-year-old can receive a 5.7 percent annuity payment.

The Trustees of the Funds of the Diocese of Virginia offers the gift annuity plan at cost and 100 percent of the proceeds go to St. Stephen's Church when the annuitant dies. This is an unusually attractive arrangement.

You might think of a gift annuity as tithing for life. The tax benefits and income for the remainder of your life are attractive, and your annuity would benefit the ministries of St. Stephen's for generations to come. When you fund an annuity with St. Stephen's Endowment Fund as the beneficiary, you are considered a member of the Legacy Society.

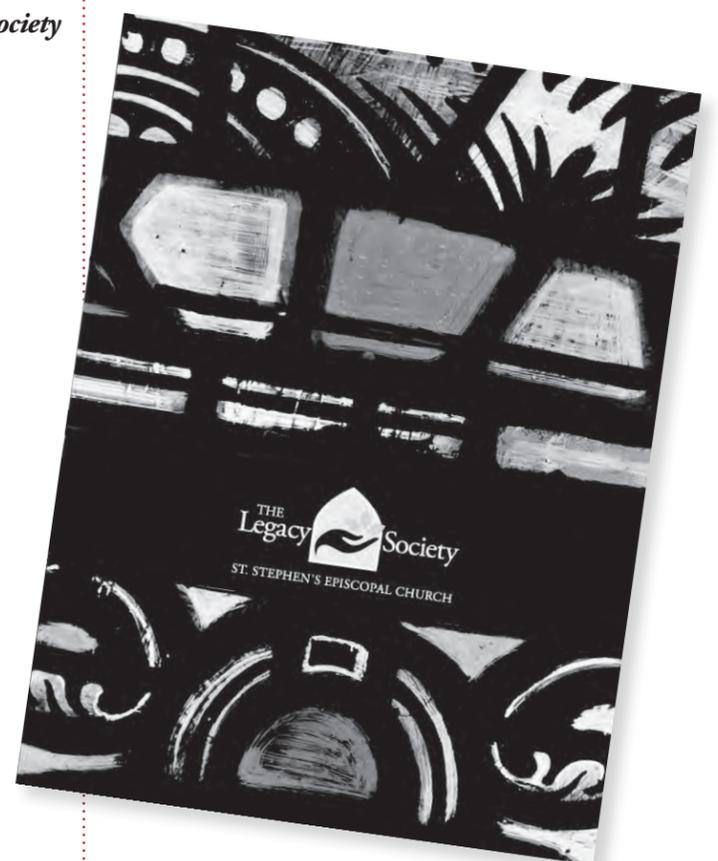
St. Stephen's endowment currently stands at about \$5.5 million, interest from which provides \$225,000 to the church's annual budget. The Legacy Society has 33 living members who have pledged a total projected at \$6 million to \$7 million for St. Stephen's Church from their future estates. As the nature of annual giving to churches changes throughout our culture, it is essential that vital parishes like ours make wise financial provisions to ensure the future witness of this parish in the community and the world.

Consult with your own professional advisers about whether a charitable gift annuity is an appropriate way for you to include St. Stephen's in your planned giving. If you wish to know more about this vehicle for estate planning, Michael Kerr, the chief executive officer of the Trustees of the Funds, is happy to talk with you. You may call Mike at 804.622.3186, or send an email to mkerr@trusteesofthefunds.org. In addition, I am available to discuss this and other ways to include St. Stephen's in your estate plans, 804.782.8756 or jsherman@bbtscottstringfellow.com ❀



By John Sherman
Chairman of the Legacy Society

You might think of a gift annuity as tithing for life, a way to benefit the ministries of St. Stephen's for generations to come.



Seasons of the Spirit Pentecost/Summer 2017

Parish Staff

To reach a staff member, call 804.288.2867. To send an email to a member of the staff, use the initial and name provided in parentheses, with @ststephensRVA.org. (If no email is listed, it means that the staff member does not have a St. Stephen's email address.)

- Janet S. Allen (jallen), *Associate for Development & Operations*
- Stan Barnett (sbarnett), *Coordinator of Kitchen Ministry*
- Sarah R. Bartenstein (sbartenstein), *Director of Communication*
- Marion S. Chenault (mchenault), *Preschool Director (288-6401)*
- Dawn Childs (dchilds), *Assistant for Children's Music Ministry*
- Donald Clements, *Sexton*
- Sarah-Keel Crews (skcrews), *Youth Ministry Coordinator*
- Kerry Court (kcourt), *Director, Virginia Girls Choir*
- Kyle Dosier (farmersmarket), *Assistant Market Manager*
- Chris Edwards (cedwards), *Interim Director, St. Stephen's Choir*
- Melissa Hipes (mhipes), *Finance Manager*
- Chris Holman, *Sexton*
- The Rev. Gary D. Jones (gjones), *Rector*
- Greta Kidd (gkidd), *Wedding Coordinator*
- Deborah Lawrence (dlawrence), *Director of Outreach*
- The Rev. Eugene H. LeCouteur (glecouteur), *Associate Rector*
- Betsy Lee (blee), *Office Manager & Pastoral Care Assistant*
- Becky Lehman (blehman), *Assistant for Hospitality & Communication*
- Christi McFadden (cmcfadden), *Finance Assistant*
- The Rev. Stephen Y. McGehee (smcgehee), *Associate Rector*
- The Rev. Claudia W. Merritt (cmerritt), *Priest Associate*
- The Rev. Penny A. Nash (pnash), *Associate Rector*
- Ben Nelson (bnelson), *Sexton, Pressman, Sunday Community Supper chef*
- Matthew Oltmann, *Sexton*
- The Rev. William L. Sachs (bsachs), *Priest Associate*
- Allison Seay (aseay), *Associate for Religion & the Arts*
- Steven Simon (ssimon), *Facilities Manager*
- Michael Simpson (msimpson), *Director of Celtic Service Musicians*
- Wei-Li Suen, *Palmer Hall accompanist*
- Michael E. Sweeney (msweeney), *Director of Family Ministries*
- Greg Vick (gvick), *Principal Organist*

Vestry

Term expires 2018

- John Barr
- JB Burtch, *Senior Warden*
- Mac Purrington
- Taylor Raquet
- Laurie Rogers, *Junior Warden*
- Beth Smith, *Assistant Treasurer*

Term Expires 2019

- John Bates, *Treasurer*
- Judy Buchanan
- Marie Carter
- Calle Luke
- Mac McElroy
- David Wise

Term expires 2020

- Melinda Hardy
- Braxton Hill, *Register*
- Richard Kay
- Martha Orr Proutt
- Cyndy Seal
- Chip Tompkins

Seasons of the Spirit

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Steven Longstaff, *designer*

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St. Stephen's receives communications awards

St. Stephen's communications efforts received several Polly Bond Awards during the annual conference of Episcopal Communicators, held this year in Cincinnati, April 19-22.

The Polly Bond Awards, named for one of the founders of Episcopal Communicators, recognize excellence in communication in a variety of categories. The competition is independently judged by experts in each of the fields being evaluated.

In the General Excellence categories, St. Stephen's received the following.

- **Print Periodicals for Parishes and Cathedrals**, Award of Merit for **Seasons of the Spirit**; Sarah Bartenstein, editor; Steven Longstaff, graphic designer
- **Web sites**, Award of Merit for ststephensRVA.org; Bartenstein and Becky Lehman
- **Campaigns**, Award of Merit for the Legacy Society campaign; Bartenstein, Longstaff, and Janet Allen, Gary Jones, and John Sherman

In the **Short Form Video** category, the year-end giving video received an Honorable Mention; it was produced by Bartenstein, Allen, and Briget Ganske.

An Honorable Mention in the **Brochures** category went to the annual giving campaign brochure produced by Bartenstein, Allen, Jones, and Longstaff.



Episcopal Communicators is an international organization of communications professionals with responsibilities in dioceses, parishes and cathedrals, seminaries, and other church-related organizations. In addition to an annual conference designed to improve skills and knowledge in the field, the organization offers webinars and other resources, and a discussion forum for its 300-plus members. Bartenstein, who serves as St. Stephen's communications director, finished her term as president of the organization at its Cincinnati conference. ❀

seasons of the SPIRIT



Sursum corda

Gary D. Jones

Every summer for over 20 years now, I've ridden my bicycle past a weathered, grey-shingled New England beach cottage, with climbing roses up the sides and a simple wooden sign above the front door with the name of the cottage: *Sursum Corda*.

I've always loved that name. *Sursum corda*: Lift up your hearts. And the implied response, *Habemus ad Dominum*: We lift them up unto the Lord.

Every time I've pedaled past that cottage, I've smiled and pondered my response to life in this world God made for us, this life God has given us to live. And I kept imagining that one day I would meet the owners and tell them how much their cottage's name has meant to me.

But this year when I rode by, I noticed that the little cottage was not as little as it used to be. It had been completely redone. The weathered grey shingles had been replaced with new cedar shakes. An addition had been put on the back. And there is a new wooden sign above the front door announcing the expanded and remodeled home's new name: Zoo Fest.

I almost crashed my bike. Zoo Fest? Really?

I feel certain the cottage was sold last year. It's hard to imagine that anyone who named their home "Sursum Corda" would eventually change their minds and decide to re-christen it "Zoo Fest," unless a strange form of dementia had set in. At first, I just hoped the former owners, my imagined friends and soul mates, had gone on to heaven. It would be too heartbreaking for them to see what had happened to their home here on earth.

I don't mean to be overly critical of the new owners, but it is almost as if they had decided, both with the cottage's expansion and with its renaming, merely to mirror our society, rather than to faithfully respond to it. And that, it seems to me, is the question that lies at the heart of the Christian life: Will we merely mirror the world in which we live, or will we faithfully respond to it?

So I'm calling my fall 2017 Sunday Forum series "Sursum corda," because we Christians are part of a long tradition of responding faithfully, hopefully, and lovingly to the world that God made and loves. That's what I see St. Stephen's doing in many ways: hiring Jessica Smith to be our new outreach assistant to help us extend our reach and our effectiveness in the community; expanding our



By Gary D. Jones

environmental stewardship; continuing our jail ministry and discussions about race; providing feeding of all kinds; offering daily ministries of prayer, worship, hospitality, and compassion.

In the forum, I'll begin with a look at St. Paul's "Epistle of Joy," his Letter to the Philippians. "Rejoice in the Lord always," he writes. "Again, I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4) Paul is convinced we have a choice.

Then I'll explore the medieval Gothic cathedral as a mirror of heaven and as a shaper and nurturer of souls. We'll look at our own beautiful St. Stephen's in that context, and what its symbolic features can teach us. Finally, I'll discuss timeless practices, disciplines, habits of the heart, and rituals of return that lift the heart and restore the soul (see page 11).

My conviction is that the world doesn't need a mirror. It needs a faithful, hopeful, and loving response. And we are just the ones to offer it.

Sursum corda. ❀

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Creation care takes root at St. Stephen's Church



Caring for God's creation has long been a key emphasis at St. Stephen's. This fall, in a collaboration of clergy, vestry and the Environmental Stewardship Project Team, the parish will be building on that foundation to ramp up our commitment to creation care and climate justice.

Several "green" initiatives — some visible, others more subtle, but all important — will take shape, recognizing that stewardship of God's creation is one way we live into our baptismal vows to "serve Christ in all persons," "strive for justice and peace among all people," and "respect the dignity of every human being."

Here's what you can expect to see in the coming months:

SOLAR PANELS. This project, initiated with the assistance of the Episcopal Church Building Fund, will begin this fall with the installation of panels on the parish hall roof. Reducing our dependence on fossil fuels to generate electricity is an important step in battling climate change, and this commitment on our part — one of the first by a parish in the Episcopal Church — will serve as a model for other churches around the nation. There also will be significant financial benefits; St. Stephen's should see a positive cash flow in the first year after installation, and over the 30-year life of the panels an estimated net positive cumulative benefit of \$200,000. What's more, the panels will provide protection against the elements for the parish hall roof, extending its life.

ENERGY AUDIT. The company which has guided the installation of solar panels also provided St. Stephen's with an Environmental Stewardship Assessment, suggesting a number of proposals to decrease energy consumption in our facilities. Some of those have already been put in place, including light sensors in less trafficked areas and replacing traditional lighting with LED bulbs. Other suggestions by the ESA are being considered, including motion sensor faucets in the restrooms.

INCREASED RECYCLING. All outdoor garbage bins will be replaced with dual receptacles for garbage and recycling, with appropriate signage to assist all of us in knowing how to properly dispose of waste. In addition, dual receptacles for use indoors on Sunday mornings and at large events are on the way. The parish office currently has such receptacles and we will place more of these in other rooms. Already the paper coffee cups used during the week by small groups have been replaced with ceramic mugs. While that isn't practical for Sunday mornings and large events, biodegradable cups will replace those we currently use.



By Robert Dilday

NO MORE BUTTS. The facilities at St. Stephen's have long been smoke-free, but now the entire campus, including exterior spaces, will be designated smoke-free as well. While health concerns are naturally an important motivation, this initiative also will reduce litter on the grounds. Did you know that cigarette butts make up more than one-third of all collected litter around the country? And they're not biodegradable. Those plastic filters stick around landfills for years.

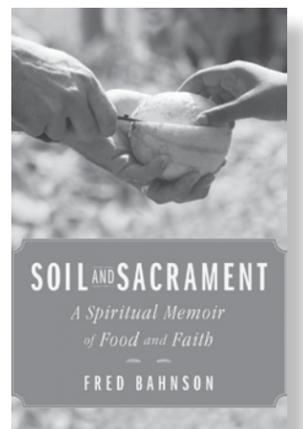
COMPOSTING. We will significantly enhance existing efforts to compost kitchen waste. Our full-service kitchen produces enormous amounts of compostable waste every day, generated by May Fair House cooking teams, two weekly suppers, and numerous funeral receptions and other events. We are exploring a partnership with a Virginia-based composting company to make this an easy and convenient process.

CAPTURING WATER. Conserving water is a top priority for climate justice advocates, and St. Stephen's will participate by placing a couple of rain barrels in strategic locations on our campus to capture rain water to be used on the planting beds in the parking lot.

FEEDING THE MIND. Two speaking events at St. Stephen's this fall will undergird the green initiative. On September 16, Fred Bahnsen, director of the Food, Health, and Ecological Well-being Program at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, will discuss his book, *Soil and Sacrament*, which many in the parish read this summer. The book is available in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's. On October 19, John Philip Newell will return, this time to explore the Celtic spirituality reflected in the life of John Muir. Muir was an early advocate of preserving the American wilderness, much of which today is included in the National Park Service. See page 3 for more about these visits.

Success in this green initiative will increase significantly with the participation of all parishioners, both corporately and individually. If you have a particular interest in any or all of these projects, contact Janet Allen (jallen@ststephensRVA.org), Gene LeCouteur (glecouteur@ststephensRVA.org), or me (robert.dilday@gmail.com) to find out what you can do. Together we can demonstrate our reverence for God's gift of creation. ❁

St. Stephen's parishioner Robert Dilday chairs our Environmental Stewardship Project Team. He is Editor in Chief of Baptist News Global.



The earth is the Lord's

Speakers to focus on our stewardship of God's gift of creation

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.—Psalm 24:1

Speakers coming to St. Stephen's Church this fall will help us reflect on our connection to God and to one another as stewards of God's creation. In a parish church that reaches out to the community through a weekly farmers market, a growing food ministry, a community meal on Sunday nights, a weekly liturgy that draws upon Celtic wisdom, and our several ministries among "the least of these," the connections are already there. This fall's speakers will help us recognize them and consider how this understanding might lead us to act.

Fred Bahnson, who directs the Food, Health & Ecological Well-Being Program at the Wake Forest University School of Divinity, will come to St. Stephen's **Saturday, September 16** and **Sunday, September 17**. On Saturday at 6 p.m., he will be joined by the Rev. Heber Brown III, the director of the Black Church Food Security Network of Baltimore, at a dinner and program.

Bahnson, author of *Soil and Sacrament*, our parish summer book, will discuss the spiritual dimensions of sustainable agriculture and shared meals. What can churches learn from those who are experiencing holiness through their engagement with the land, and what can they learn from churches?

Brown will discuss the network he leads which empowers black farmers and guides African-American churches in converting unused land to urban gardens, helping to eliminate "food deserts" in their communities. His organization's vision is "a community-centered, local food system supported by black churches and led by those most directly affected by food insecurity."



Fred Bahnson



Heber Brown

These visionary leaders will speak, appropriately, at a community meal prepared with ingredients from our farmers market vendors and others involved in growing and providing healthy local foods from local, sustainable sources. The event is open to all, and we are issuing special invitations to local organizations engaged in similar work, and to Richmond's African-American churches.

Bahnson will stay on to speak in the Sunday Forum on September 17, focusing on *Soil and Sacrament*, and he will give the reflection at the Celtic service that evening.

John Philip Newell's topic during his visit on **Thursday, October 19, at 7 p.m.** will provide a fitting complement to the Bahnson/Brown weekend, "John Muir: Celtic Prophet of Ecological Consciousness and Action." Muir, born in Scotland in 1838, moved to the United States as a child. He has been described as the archetype of humanity's oneness with the earth and as the patron saint of American environmentalism. He was the most articulate and passionate advocate for what would become our system of national parks. Newell will explore the Celtic vision at the heart of Muir's spirituality and invite us to be part of the relationship between loving the earth and protecting it.

Registration and details for these events and those listed below will be at ststephens-RVA.org/speakers. ♣

MORE SPEAKERS FOR 2017-18

Father Martin Laird: Advent retreat, Saturday, December 2, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Eben Alexander, Author of *Proof of Heaven*: lecture, Friday, January 19, and workshop, Saturday, January 20, 2018; co-sponsored with Chrysalis Institute and the Institute on Noetic Sciences

Natasha Trethewey, former U.S. Poet Laureate: poetry reading, talk, book signing, Thursday, January 25, 7 p.m. (see page 6)

Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE: Lenten retreat, Friday, February 16 and Saturday, February 17

The Rev. Becca Stevens, Magdalen and Thistle Farms: workshop, Saturday, March 17

Fruit ministry nearly two decades old

Weekly effort expands as 20th anniversary approaches

By Deb Lawrence

St. Stephen's fruit ministry, the longest-running food ministry in our parish, will turn 20 years old in 2018. The faithful volunteers who serve in this effort, however, are not resting on their good work, but expanding the ministry.

Established in 1998 by the late Lucy Levery, the fruit ministry serves elderly residents in the Gilpin Court area of the city with weekly deliveries of fresh fruit. The "Fruit Loops," as they were initially called, became a vibrant and effective ministry. For over 19 years the volunteers have met at St. Stephen's nearly every Monday morning to sort and package bananas, apples and oranges, and then deliver bags of fruit to residents who live in subsidized housing units in Gilpin Court. This is the only fruit many recipients have in their diet, and in rare cases, it is the only food they will have to eat on the day it's delivered.

Shockoe Hill and Fay Towers (named for a St. Stephen's parishioner, the late Fred Fay) are the two housing units in Gilpin Court where our volunteers have delivered fruit all these years. Now they have a third location for the deliveries: Highland Park Senior Apartments.

Since a City of Richmond Master Plan calls for the demolition of Fay Towers after all 200-plus residents are relocated to other housing, many Fay Towers residents began moving to Highland Park Senior Apartments in January. That building, a school when it was built in 1909, now offers 77 one-bedroom apartments for low-income seniors.

Knowing this change was coming, St. Stephen's volunteers began planning how to continue to serve those being moved as well as the ones remaining at Fay Towers for the time being. Janie Satterfield, who took over the leadership of the fruit ministry from long-time volunteer Rosie Wood, stayed in touch with the residents and initiated communication with Highland



Volunteers pack apples, bananas and oranges for delivery on Monday mornings.

Park Apartments staff. Our volunteers realized that adding a third delivery location would be a challenge, but knew the effort would be worth it.

The group now delivers fruit to an average of 140 people in three locations every week.

The first fruit delivery to the 77 residents at Highland Park occurred June 26. I was fortunate to be able to accompany the group when they made that delivery. As our St. Stephen's volunteers knocked on doors and rang bells, the faces of the residents opening those doors showed pure joy. The volunteers and residents met each other with smiles and hugs as our parishioners handed each resident a bag containing two bananas, two apples and two oranges. Before the Highland Park deliveries began in June, many of the residents had missed the volunteers and worried that

they wouldn't see them once they moved from Fay Towers. Their concern was not about the fruit—it was about seeing people they cared about. Our volunteers were just as eager to see their old friends and catch up with them in their new apartments.

This is the real ministry of the "Fruit Loops." It is not just about the distribution of food. It is about sharing the love of Jesus by being a weekly presence. Volunteers sing "Happy Birthday" to a resident, or listen with compassion as another discusses a battle with cancer. St. Stephen's parishioners are there each week with an offering of fresh fruit—and with a smile, a touch and an open heart.

As Janie Satterfield said, "This ministry is more than just packing bags of fruit and delivering it. It's about two communities in our great city, one from the West End and one from the East End, coming together on Monday mornings to share friendship."

It is being the hands and feet of Christ in the world, in our own community, loving one another. ♣

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We need volunteers!

Volunteers meet Monday mornings at 9:00 at St. Stephen's to sort and package fruit. Around 10 a.m., they carpool to Fay Towers, Highland Park Senior Apartments and Shockoe Hill to distribute the bags of fruit. The group is usually back at St. Stephen's between 11:45 and noon. If you can't help deliver, help with packaging is always needed.

We need fruit!

To continue to serve 140 people each week, your donations of bananas, apples and oranges are critical. Please bring these donations every Sunday. Thank you!



Food and drink

Food and beverages at the Bluegrass Bash will be available from the following vendors. In addition, there will be bottled water and other non-alcoholic beverages.

- Carytown Burgers and Fries
- Jadean's Smokin Six-O BBQ
- Moniques Crepes
- Goatocado
- Growlers to Go Tap Trailer (beer)
- Label to Table Wines

Where does the money go?

The money raised by the annual golf tournament and Bluegrass Bash directly supports our outreach ministries by allowing the outreach committee of the vestry to award more substantial grants to our community partners than we otherwise could. The recipients of grants in 2017 are:

- Area Congregations Together in Service (ACTS)
- Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School
- CARITAS
- ChildSavers
- Communities in Schools
- CrossOver Health Clinic
- Elijah House Academy
- Grace Inside
- The Healing Place
- Housing Families First
- Peter Paul Development Center
- Rebuilding Together Richmond
- Richmond Christian Leadership Institute
- St. Andrew's School
- St. John's "Give Me History"
- St. Stephen's Refugee Resettlement
- Side by Side
- VIPCare
- Virginia Supportive Housing
- Westminster-Canterbury Fellowship Fund
- Mission trips and ministries in the U.S. and abroad

Double the fun

Golf tournament, Bluegrass Bash raise additional funds for outreach

Two annual events will be here soon, both designed to generate fun and funds. Specifically, the funds increase the amount of support we can provide to our outreach partners, over and above what we fund through your pledges. We look forward to having a good time with one another and welcoming people from throughout the community to join the fun. Be sure to invite friends, relatives, neighbors and colleagues.

Whether you're a golfer or not, you can take part in St. Stephens' Outreach Golf Tournament on **Thursday, September 14**. The tournament will take place at Meadowbrook Country Club, with registration and lunch at noon, and a shotgun start at 1:00 p.m. Arrange a foursome with friends or colleagues, or register individually and we will team you up with other players. We will have exciting prizes for winning teams! It's an afternoon of fun and good-natured competition, all to support our outreach ministries. Don't play golf? Many sponsorship opportunities are available to provide important support to the tournament, and to our outreach partners. Visit ststephensRVA.org/golf to learn more and to register, or stop by the outreach table near the elevator in the parish house.



By Deb Lawrence

On **Friday, September 15**, the Bluegrass Bash returns, 5-8 p.m., in the parking lot on the Somerset Road side of the parish house. We are excited that regional favorite Big Boss Combo will be our headliner. You may remember this band from one of our earliest events, back when the Bluegrass Bash was held in the summer. Back by popular demand, Will Perkinson and Cook County Bluegrass will open the evening, setting the stage for excellent music with local connections. Food and beverages will be available for purchase – food trucks, local beer and wine as well as water and soft drinks – and we'll have free activities for kids. Chairs and blankets are welcome, but no coolers, please.

This fundraiser has become a not-to-be missed event, so don't delay in purchasing your tickets, on sale through our Web site, ststephensRVA.org/bluegrass, and in the parish office. Prices are \$7 for children (ages 2-11), \$10 for ages 12 and up, and the family maximum is \$30. Prices go up the day of the event (to \$10/\$15/\$40), so get your tickets in advance. Bring the whole family – bring the whole neighborhood! ♣



Volunteers pour beverages for guests at last year's Bash.

Briget Ganske

New outreach assistant will help St. Stephen's expand its reach

Jessica Smith will focus on recruiting and training more volunteers

By Sarah Bartenstein

The people of St. Stephen's Church are God's hands and feet in the world. We are here to make a difference in the lives of others, in many ways. One of the most important is to be with the poorest members of our community, people who suffer from trauma, hunger, violence and other ills. For the past 10 years, Deb Lawrence, our outreach director, has coordinated our response to those in need in our own city and throughout the world. Though Deb has help from the outreach committee and dedicated volunteers, she has been the lone staff member in outreach.



Jessica Smith

Until August 16.

Jessica Framme Smith, known to many at St. Stephen's from her work with Communities in Schools, is our new outreach assistant. Jessica was the CIS site coordinator at Fairfield Court Elementary School, our outreach partner, for more than five years before becoming the Director for Elementary Programming for CIS, where she supervised all the site coordinators for elementary schools in Richmond and Henrico County. She brings a unique and valuable perspective, says Deb: "She knows us—but from a distance."

"I am so excited about getting to rekindle relationships I had with volunteers at Fairfield Court Elementary School," says Jessica, "as well as meeting new people at St. Stephen's. I'm eager to continue the work we all do, on a different level."

Though Jessica will be working with Deb on all aspects of our outreach ministries, given her background, we know she'll be uniquely positioned to help recruit more St. Stephen's volunteers to serve in the East End.

"We need more people at Fairfield," Jessica says. She will also recruit, train and place volunteers at Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School and Peter Paul Development Center, our other East End partners.

Thanks to her experience with Communities in Schools, Jessica is able to call on her familiarity with local resources and systems to strengthen our outreach efforts. Knowing the East End as she does, she can identify the needs and motivate volunteers to address those needs.

For example, she points out that volunteers should be "trauma-informed." Nearly every student at a school like Fairfield has suffered some form of trauma, and it affects their classroom behavior and their ability to process information. Jessica will work on volunteer orientation that includes awareness of the "heightened state" of students our parishioners serve.

"Sometimes a volunteer goes to Fairfield and feels they haven't accomplished anything," she acknowledges. "But showing up is the most important thing." Students notice if you keep coming back, she says. "Time is the most important thing you can give to the kids."

Jessica's journey to this point includes attending St. Benedict's and St. Gertrude's schools in Richmond, and studying art and art history at Virginia Commonwealth University where she earned a BFA in art education. She taught art at Fairfield Middle School but learned that what she enjoyed most about the school environment was the interaction with students before and after school, mentoring, and working with parents and other educators to address special chal-

lenges and solutions for individual students. That led her to Communities in Schools.

Jessica and her husband David have two daughters, one entering second grade and one entering junior kindergarten at St. Bridget's School next door to St. Stephen's.

NEW INITIATIVES IN OUTREACH

Having Jessica on board will allow Deb to focus some of her attention on the implementation of a client choice model for our food pantry (sometimes called a "grocery store" model), and a new initiative in employment assistance that is a focus of our capital campaign's outreach component.

Deb and parishioner Mary Anne Burke have been to FeedMore (the community food bank) to learn about the client choice model, which allows clients of our food pantry to make their own selections rather than being handed bags of groceries which might or might not contain foods that are suitable for their families. For example, a family member might have a food allergy or dietary restriction, or the client might not have refrigeration for milk to pour over cereal they receive.

The client choice model not only reduces waste, it offers a measure of dignity to the person in need. A form of client choice is already available to our food pantry visitors with the fresh produce, bread and other items they are offered on Mondays, thanks to our generous farmers market vendors who donate this fresh food.

St. Stephen's is the only food pantry in the area that allows clients to visit every week. For this reason, we sometimes have visitors from as far away as Petersburg, or even farther.

Assistance for those just released from jail, or others who might not have the interview skills, contacts, appropriate wardrobe, or other resources that many of us take for granted is another area where many at St. Stephen's are eager to make a difference. Having Jessica on board will provide more time for Deb to focus on this initiative.

Funding for this new—and long-desired—position is possible because of other staff changes in recent months, and thanks to a special gift from a parishioner who wishes to remain anonymous. ❀



Sarah Bartenstein

Campaign leadership presents final report to the vestry

By Carol Dickinson, Andy Luke, Duncan Owen
Capital Campaign Co-Chairs

At the May vestry meeting, leaders of St. Stephen's centennial capital campaign, "Embracing a New Century," delivered their final report, formally transitioning oversight of the campaign budget and remaining priorities to the vestry. During the meeting the team provided an overview of the project—which began in 2010 in preparation for St. Stephen's Centennial Celebration in 2011—reviewed campaign finances, and offered recommendations on how to manage ongoing work.

In reviewing the project timeline, leaders traced the parish's journey from an early vision exceeding \$15 million to a construction and outreach project approved by the vestry of \$9.7 million, with the goal of tending to aging systems, restoring sacred spaces, improving accessibility, and increasing outreach. Major components were completed on time and under budget, followed by the completion of the memorial garden expansion earlier this year.

Thanks to the generosity of St. Stephen's parishioners, pledges to the campaign through April totaled \$9.9 million, of which \$8.7 million has already been received. With construction and other project-related expenses largely behind us, the vestry and staff are committed to ensuring sufficient remaining pledge income is set aside to meet the campaign outreach commitment. In addition, the vestry approved supplementing our capital maintenance reserve, by way of the Reserve Fund, to provide for capital maintenance, as originally envisioned by the campaign leadership team and vestry.

Campaign representatives also presented to the vestry a prioritized list of other items around campus that still need tending. Developed with input from the rector, vestry and the buildings and grounds committee, the list reflects (in most cases) deliberate choices made well before construction began as campaign leaders pared back the budget so as not to exceed projected income. Most items identified can be remedied for little or no cost. The vestry will work through the list under the leadership of Laurie Rogers, junior warden, and the buildings and grounds committee. Except for any that are no cost/low cost or safety-related (e.g., courtyard pavers, lighting), items will not be considered until the vestry sees meaningful progress towards fulfilling the outreach component of the campaign. Lastly, campaign leaders outlined for the vestry ongoing support it will offer to staff and other leaders around outreach and monitoring outstanding pledges.

As we mark the completion of the campaign, we are reminded again of the faithfulness and generosity of this parish. Thanks be to God! ❀

Food for the soul and company for the journey

Poetry series enters second year

“Somebody walked...out of a cave and looked up at the sky with wonder and said, ‘Ahhh.’ And that was the first poem.”

So said the late Lucille Clifton in an interview, explaining that poetry began when humans first wondered at the beauty of the earth.

In the spirit of that wonder, St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church will offer regular poetry readings (see schedule) for a second year. The artists who have agreed to visit represent some of the richest and most inspiring voices writing today, and it continues to be a great privilege for me to help cultivate and nourish the marriage between religion and the arts. Over the course of the last program year, we hosted several fine poetry readings, culminating in a standing-room-only presentation by Jane Hirshfield in the spring.

I believe the work St. Stephen’s is doing on behalf of the arts is tremendously valuable not only for readers and book lovers and poetry-evangelists, but for those who simply acknowledge—without commentary—some connection between the life of the spirit and the life of the mind. Each year the mainstream media predicts the death of poetry—just as it predicts the death of printed books and newspapers and even the death of the need for human teachers. Everything from literature to the classroom itself is becoming digitized, electronic, virtual. Yet poetry, ever resilient, ever real, and requiring humans, continues to defy its predicted demise. It is true that most Americans are not reading poetry, true that most Americans cannot name a contemporary poet, and according to one poll in recent years, true that only 6.7 percent of the entire American public reads poetry at all. And yet, even for those who might fear the poem, the song of poetry calls to us. I have always loved what Gustave Flaubert said: “There is not a particle of life which does not bear poetry within it.”

Here at St. Stephen’s, we continue to honor the arts as food for the soul and company for the journey. After all, in times of national crisis and of tragedy, in private mourning and personal catastrophe, on occasions of our most profound grief and joy, at weddings and at funerals, it is poetry that mediates for us, clarifies for us, and says what we ourselves perhaps could not say. It is poetry by which we mark our most difficult, our most fervent, our most tender experiences. Poetry is truth-bearing and magic-making, an invitation to enter into wonder and mystery, to pay closer attention to our selves and our world, to draw nearer to the invisible, to the beautiful, and to the sacred.

My belief is essentially that we do not have to understand poetry to benefit from it. A student who cannot distinguish the Petrarchan from the Elizabethan sonnet, or the sestina from the villanelle, can still experience pleasure in poetry, just as a person who cannot name the flowers in the garden still knows the beauty of its blooms. A person who cannot identify birds at the feeder still delights in being visited by them. And a person who cannot read music or play an instrument or even understand the words being sung, still knows when they are listening to something transcendent. Simply put, you don’t have to know how to cook in order to enjoy a delicious meal. Poetry can be that food.

We do not have to understand poetry to benefit from it. A student who cannot distinguish the Petrarchan from the Elizabethan sonnet, or the sestina from the villanelle, can still experience pleasure in poetry, just as a person who cannot name the flowers in the garden still knows the beauty of its blooms.

Of course poetry isn’t dying. Especially not with St. Stephen’s Church as an ambassador. In a world that tends to be noisy, busy, fast—all things poetry is not—it feels true to say that an arts ministry might be one antidote, a counter, to all that is otherwise swirling around us. Poetry—like church—is contemplative and life-affirming, and it awakens us to beauty, mystery and matters of the soul. The work of the poet is the work of the sacred and when I have devoted some time to poetry, just as when I devote my time to prayer, I often feel comforted if not a little stronger, a little wiser, a little more resilient, a little more inspired to face what needs facing. As the poet Li-Young Lee reminds us, the relationship of poetry to prayer is an intimate one: “Every poem is a descendent of God.”

I hope to see you at these events. ❀

During each of the three Covenant Periods at St. Stephen’s, Allison offers a weekly resource called *Wellspring*, which includes a brief meditation on a single poem. You may sign up to receive these reflections by visiting ststephensRVA.org/wellspring.



By Allison Seay

Poetry readings at St. Stephen’s, 2017-18

There is no charge for poetry readings at St. Stephen’s. Tickets are required for Natasha Trethewey’s reading. These are available at no charge, though we invite donations of any amount to defray the cost of her visit. Each reading includes a reception and time for questions and book signing.

October 5, 2017 | 7 p.m.

Gabriel Fried

Gabriel Fried is the author of *The Children Are Reading* (Four Way Books, 2017) and *Making the New Lamb Take* (Sarabande, 2007), which was named a best poetry collection of 2007 by Foreword and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. He is also the editor of an anthology, *Heart of the Order: Baseball Poems*. His work has appeared in many magazines, including *American Poetry Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Paris Review*, and *The Yale Review*. He has been a fellow at the MacDowell Colony and a Director’s Guest at the Civitella Ranieri Foundation in Umbertide, Italy. He teaches in the graduate creative writing programs of the University of Missouri and Sierra Nevada College, and is the longtime poetry editor at Persea Books, a literary publishing house based in New York City. He lives in Columbia, Missouri.



Gabriel Fried

Of his first collection, his publisher writes, “[Reading this book], we find ourselves unexpectedly amidst Biblical and mythological stories so intimately retold that they seem populated by friends and relatives . . . the distance between myth and the everyday, collapsed. We remember Eliot’s dictum that only a poet with personality in the first place is able to repress it. And we welcome this poet, who gives us—instead of yet another hip, new, media-ready version of the self—the world we live.”

November 2, 2017 | 7 p.m.

Tarfia Faizullah

Tarfia Faizullah’s poems appear widely in periodicals and anthologies both in the United States and abroad, and have been translated into Bengali, Spanish, Persian, and Chinese. She is the author of *Seam* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2016) and *Registers of Illuminated Villages*, forthcoming from Graywolf in 2018. Her honors include two Pushcart Prizes, a Fulbright Fellowship, POETRY Magazine’s Frederick Bock Prize, among others, and she was recently recognized by Harvard Law School as one of 50 Women Inspiring Change. Tarfia co-directs OW!Arts, a collaborative publishing venture with the poet Jamaal May. She is the Nicholas Delbanco Visiting Professor of Poetry at the University of Michigan’s Helen Zell Writers’ program.



Tarfia Faizullah

Natasha Trethewey says of *Seam*, “In poems made more harrowing for what’s not said—the poet’s elegant and wise restraint—we confront the past and its aftermath in the lives of women interrupted by violence and brutality and loss. Memory and the journey back are always fraught with difficulties. . . Tarfia Faizullah is a poet of brave and unflinching vision and *Seam* is a beautiful and necessary book.”

Thursday, January 25, 2018 | 7 p.m.

Natasha Trethewey, Former U.S. Poet Laureate

We are thrilled that our 2017-18 series will feature Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Natasha Trethewey.

Natasha Trethewey served two terms as the 19th Poet Laureate of the United States (2012-2014), and is a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize. Trethewey, who received her master’s degree in English and creative writing from Hollins University, is the author of four collections of poetry, *Thrall* (2012); *Native Guard* (2006), for which she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize; *Bellocq’s Ophelia* (2002); and *Domestic Work* (2000), selected by Rita Dove as the winner of the inaugural Cave Canem Poetry Prize for the best first book by an African-American poet and won both the 2001 Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Book Prize and the 2001 Lillian Smith Award for Poetry. Her book of nonfiction, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, appeared in 2010. She is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Beinecke Library at Yale, and the Bunting Fellowship Program of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard. At Emory University she is Robert W. Woodruff Professor of English and Creative Writing. In 2012 she was named Poet Laureate of the State of Mississippi and in 2013 she was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Her books are for sale in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen’s.



Natasha Trethewey

continued on next page

March 15, 2018 | 7 p.m.
Molly McCully Brown

Molly McCully Brown is the author of *The Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded* (Persea Books, 2017). Her poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Gulf Coast*, *Pleiades*, *Image*, *TriQuarterly Online*, *Kenyon*



Molly McCully Brown

Review, *The Adroit Journal*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Raised in rural Virginia, she holds degrees from Bard College at Simon's Rock, Stanford University, and the University of Mississippi.

Haunted by the voices of those committed to the notorious Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded in Amherst County, Virginia, epicenter of the American eugenics movement in the first half of the 20th century, Brown's evocative debut marks the emergence of a poet of exceptional poise and compassion, who grew up in the shadow of the colony itself. Poet Ada Limón praises the book, saying, "This is nothing less than a revelatory debut that reveals how to stitch something undeniably beautiful out of immense pain and solitude. Intelligent, intricate, fearless, and relentlessly acute, these poems do the good and complicated work of both shattering and singing." Writer Beth Ann Fennelly says, "I am stunned by the power of this deeply imagined collection. Because the author herself is 'spastic, palsied, and off-balance,' she realizes that, had she been born 50 years earlier, she might have ended up in the infamous Virginia State Colony..." Brown has cerebral palsy.

To listen to an August 14 interview with Brown on NPR's *Fresh Air With Terry Gross*, go to our Web site, ststephensRVA.org/poets.

April 12, 2018 | 7 p.m.
Nathaniel Perry

Nathaniel Perry is the author of *Nine Acres* (American Poetry Review, 2011), which won the 2011 APR/Honickman First Book Prize. His poems and translations have appeared recently in *American Poetry Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Gettysburg*



Nathaniel Perry

Reviews, *Bat City Review*, and elsewhere. He is the editor of the *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review* and associate professor of English at Hampden-Sydney College. He lives with his family in rural southside Virginia.

Nine Acres is composed of 52 poems, all of which take their names from the chapter titles of horticulturalist M.G. Bain's 1935 book on small-farm management, *Five Acres and Independence*. As one reviewer writes, "The poems in his debut collection consider what it means to be faithful—as husband, father, neighbor, and as steward of land, poultry, orchard, and garden...they confront the passions, tedium, graces, and sweat labor of such fidelities both thematically and structurally." The poet Marie Howe praises Perry's work, as well: "[T]his is a book that concerns itself with freedom and constraint, with what we used to call husbandry—care of the land, of animals, (of a marriage, of children). *Nine Acres* speaks of the responsibilities of love. ... These poems restore and refresh—they taste of water and metal, arising from a spring close to the source." ❀



When he was at table with them, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. They said to each other, 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?'—Luke 24:30-32

St. Stephen's Church is one of the largest Episcopal parishes in the United States. It would be easy to get lost in a church as large as this one, but many people here experience a surprising kind of intimacy that is all too rare in most aspects of our 21st century lives.

They find this depth of caring, hospitality and mutual support through an Emmaus Group.

Emmaus Groups are small groups of six to 10 parishioners who meet weekly for 90 minutes to tend to their spiritual lives and grow in Christian community. These groups are the focus of prayer, hospitality, and welcome – small communities within our larger parish. Each group has one or two leaders who have received training in facilitating small groups, and the core of the gatherings is attentiveness to the spiritual growth of participants and the experience of authentic community.

Groups meet for 10-week "covenant periods," one each in the fall, winter, and spring. Participants usually join a group at the beginning of a covenant period, and many will continue with the same group indefinitely.

The name "Emmaus" comes from the well-known story from the Gospel according to Luke (24:13-32) about the disciples who encountered the resurrected Jesus on the road to Emmaus. In that story, the disciples have a deep, spiritual conversation with each other and with Jesus as they travel, but it is only when they reach their destination and break bread together that they recognize Jesus.

We are always traveling with each other and with Christ—who can seem hidden or disguised—and sometimes we need to stop and join in attentive hospitality with each other, in order for our eyes to be opened and for the events of our lives to fall in place.

Emmaus Groups are built on four pillars: Spiritual Reflection, Mutual Care and Support, Prayer, and Service.

Spiritual Reflection

At the heart of each weekly 90-minute gathering is the opportunity to reflect on one's life of faith and relationship with God – where do we sense God in our daily lives, and how are we meeting the challenges of living faithfully? Sometimes groups will use a passage from the Bible, a spiritual book, or a special topic chosen by the group to serve as a catalyst for reflection. Scriptural and other resources are available for groups who request them. But it is enough for groups to provide an environment in which one is invited to reflect deeply, "How is it with my soul?"

Mutual Care and Support

Emmaus Groups are not meant to be "therapy" groups, but communities for growth and deepening in the Christian life. Groups are designed to be centers of hospitality – we first of all welcome each other as Christ welcomes us. And Emmaus Groups are safe places where participants can explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences without judgment. In a sense, people today are better connected than ever. Modern technology offers us a kind of access to one another and to the world that was previously unheard of. But in a deeper, spiritual sense, many people feel less connected than ever. Emmaus Groups provide a weekly opportunity for participants to make the kind of connections that truly matter, providing mutual care and support for the spiritual journey. Emmaus Groups very often manifest this care outside of group meetings, as well. When a participant is having a medical procedure done, for example, he or she might choose to ask for the prayers and support of group members. When a group member is going through a time of great challenge, or of special celebration, fellow group members are sometimes the first to know.

Prayer

Each 90-minute gathering of Emmaus Groups includes an informal prayer or worship experience decided by the group. In this way, participants surrender themselves more completely to God and prepare for a meeting in which all are more attuned to the presence of God in their midst. Some groups choose simply to begin with a period of prayerful silence, as a way of leaving the busy world of "doing" and entering into a posture of listening and receiving.

Service

In place of a regular meeting one week during each covenant period, groups usually choose to do a service project together, discovering Christ in the act of serving together. It could be helping with an event at Anna Julia Cooper School, Peter Paul Development Center or Fairfield Elementary School; it could be helping with a church meal, our farmers market, or providing hospitality for a church event; it could be stocking our food pantry or helping with food distribution and welcoming the hungry; or it could be preparing supplies for a pilgrimage to the Dominican Republic, helping the Fruit Ministry, or serving a meal to homeless people. The possibilities for a simple service project together are numerous. The idea is that we experience together something of what it means to embody Christ in the world, even as we meet Christ in those whom we serve.

Joining a group

The clergy and staff of St. Stephen's have been working over the summer to identify and prepare new Emmaus Group leaders, and increase the number of groups available to those who wish to consider taking part in this unique opportunity. If you would like to join a group, please contact any member of the clergy, Janet Allen (jallen@ststephensRVA.org), or Betsy Lee (blee@ststephensRVA.org). ❀

COVENANT PERIODS, 2017-18

Fall: week of September 25 through week of November 27, 2017

Winter: week of January 8 through week of March 12, 2018

Spring: week of March 19 through week of May 21, 2018

Groups and classes



Briget Ganske

The Inquirers Class and Philip's Way (communion preparation for youth) include an instructed Eucharist led by the rector.

St. Stephen's Church offers opportunities for those who want to read and discuss a particular book, or practice yoga, chi kung, centering prayer or another discipline, or learn what it means to be an Episcopalian or how to read the New Testament in Greek.

These are the classes whose details were available at press time. Additions will be published on our Web site and will be available at Rally Day (Sunday, September 10).

No registration is required unless stated otherwise; there is no charge for classes but several include a suggested donation. For meeting locations not listed, check the signboard in the entry way to the parish house when you arrive on the day of your group. If registration is required, you can do that online (ststephensRVA.org/classes) or at Rally Day, September 10.

MONDAYS

Chair Yoga | 11 a.m. | year-round | Led by Celine Burn
suggested donation \$10 per class

Chair yoga is a safe and supportive style of gentle yoga that allows individuals to engage in flexibility exercises as well as balance and coordination moves. Celine Burn is a group exercise instructor certified by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America who specializes in teaching seniors chair yoga through the Silver Sneakers certification program. Celine also has her 200-hour yoga certification from YogaWorks and is a member of the American Fitness Association of America. This class is open to all ages and is ideal for those who would like to improve and maintain their wellness as they age. No registration is needed.

Greek Bible Study | 3 p.m. | resumes September 18 | Led by Stuart Settle

The Greek Bible study group is beginning its fifth year at St. Stephen's and meets to read in Koine Greek and translate the gospel and epistle lessons for the following Sunday. The only prerequisite is a basic knowledge of ancient Greek. Register at ststephensRVA.org/classes or sign up at Rally Day.

C.S. Lewis' *The Great Divorce* | 6:30 p.m. | October 2-30 | Led by Bob Dibble

The Great Divorce has been called C.S. Lewis's *Divine Comedy* (by way of Dante), but actually it was a response to William Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; Lewis writes of their divorce. Inspiration for this story comes from the medieval idea of the refrigerium, the refreshment or vacation from Hell granted to some of the souls abiding there. So Lewis' narrator leaves the dreary streets of the underworld and, with a coterie of other ghosts, journeys by flying bus to a lovely land that he comes to realize is the forecourt of Heaven. In that enchanted place, the ghosts meet many denizens from the heavenly world, who attempt to lure the poor souls out of their misery. Through these sketches, Lewis helps us wrestle with such timeless concepts as the nature of good and evil, of sin and temptation, heaven and hell, vanity and self-deception, and perhaps most importantly, with the power of our spiritual choices. Bob will facilitate an exploration of Lewis's theological fantasy as together we discover, or re-discover, the riches contained in this small but powerful book. Of course, the conversation will be strengthened by having read the book prior to the class, but you may read as we go. Register at ststephensRVA.org/classes or sign up at Rally Day.

TUESDAYS

Fathers Bible Study | 7 a.m. | resumes September 12

On Tuesdays during the program year, fathers meet in the Library at St. Stephen's for an hour for Bible study, prayer, and fellowship. No registration is required, and drop-ins are welcome. The group occasionally breaks for school holidays; check in with Michael Sweeney in the parish office (msweeney@ststephensRVA.org).

Contemplative Prayer | 8:45 a.m. | year-round | Led by Millie Cain

During this weekly session participants gather in the Lounge to sit together in silence. Then they have a short walking meditation followed by a contemplative dialogue. The session closes with silence. All are welcome and no registration is necessary.

Yoga for Vibrant Aging | 9:30 a.m. | begins September 12 | Led by Kay Franz

suggested donation \$10 per class

This one-hour mindful yoga class is for active older adults or anyone else wanting to build strength, flexibility and balance. Single poses are done standing, on the floor, or at the wall. No up and down from the floor is required. The focus on gentle moves and long holds will help maintain and build bone and muscle strength and flexibility, as well as improve balance. Kay is a Yoga Alliance certified ERYT-200, RYT-500 yoga teacher and a NAMA certified Ayurvedic Health Counselor. She will also occasionally share some tips on diet and lifestyle to improve health and well-being. No registration is needed.

NEW: Yogalates Primer & Classes | 5 p.m. | intro session September 19 | Led by Celine Burn

Suggested donation \$10 per class

On Tuesday, September 19, from 5 until 6:30 p.m., certified yoga and Pilates instructor Celine Burn will offer a "Yogalates" introductory workshop. Learn to flow from yoga poses into precise Pilates movement. Experience the flexibility and mindfulness of yoga sequences while focusing on the core-enhancing strength moves of the Pilates discipline. Based on demonstrated interest in the workshop, Celine will subsequently hold weekly classes on Tuesday evenings from 5 until 6 p.m. (If you cannot attend the introductory workshop, you will still be able to join in the subsequent Tuesday evening 5 p.m. classes.) Celine is certified by STOTT Pilates & YogaWorks. If you have questions, please contact her at celineburn@yahoo.com or 917.294.9554.

Into Stillness: Mindfulness Meditation | beginning September 19

Beginning students, 6 p.m. | Continuing students, 7:30 p.m. | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

suggested donation \$45 for the four-week course

Mindfulness meditation is valuable for those who are looking for new ways of dealing with stress. Using Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a proven method for reducing stress, participants will learn to be still and present, a key component of wellness and growth in spiritual life. Register at ststephensRVA.org/classes or sign up at Rally Day.

WEDNESDAYS

Mothers Bible Study | 9:30 a.m. | resumes September 27

Mothers gather in the Library for Bible study and fellowship. Child care is available. Please contact Sarah Moyer-Thacker for additional details, smthacker4@gmail.com. No registration is needed.

Gentle Yoga | 9:30 a.m. | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

suggested donation \$10 per class

This class offers easeful postures to open and renew the mind and the body. Using teachings from Swaroopa yoga, Integral yoga, the Alexander Technique, Bones for Life, and mindfulness meditation, the class will lead the student to connect to support, sensation, sound and breath. The student will learn how to integrate the teaching in their daily practice. No registration is needed.

Continued on next page

Chair Yoga | 11 a.m. | year-round | Led by Celine Burn

suggested donation \$10 per class

Chair yoga is a safe and supportive style of gentle yoga that allows individuals to engage in flexibility exercises as well as balance and coordination moves. Celine Burn is a group exercise instructor certified by the Aerobics and Fitness Association of America who specializes in teaching seniors chair yoga through the Silver Sneakers certification program. Celine also has her 200-hour yoga certification from YogaWorks and is a member of the American Fitness Association of America. This class is open to all ages and is ideal for those who would like to improve and maintain their wellness as they age. No registration is needed.

Into Stillness: Guided Practice | 6 p.m. | four weeks beginning September 20 | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

Donate as you wish

For those who want to continue their mindfulness practice, JoAnn leads a brief (35-minute) session on four Wednesdays.

Introduction to Meditation | 6:30 p.m. | two sessions: September 13-October 11, and October 18-November 15 | Led by Lynn Brooke

Suggestion donation: \$100 for each five-week session; register directly with Lynn at LynnBBrooke@gmail.com or 804 212 8047.

Meditation is an approach to training the mind, similar to the way fitness is an approach to training the body. The practice of meditation awakens us from our conditioned and habitual thinking, which often keeps us from our inner wisdom, or natural presence. Through practice we begin to understand that this presence is a recognition of the here and now. We learn to live life in the moment. We wake up to presence, or loving awareness, that is already here. While many of us know the benefits of meditation, we may struggle with the basic components. This step-by-step beginner class is designed to familiarize you with beginning meditation techniques, and makes the practice easy to understand. Lynn is the co-founder and former creative director of Yoga Source in Richmond. She is certified as a teacher trainer with the Yoga Alliance (500 RYT), and has been certified as a spiritual director by the Haden Institute in Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Inquirers Class | 6:30 p.m. | begins September 27 | Led by Steve McGehee

This class includes the basics of what it means to be an Episcopalian. It's the class new members take, especially if they wish to be confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church, but it's also an interesting refresher course for lifelong Episcopalians. Questions are not only welcome, they form the basis for this class. The class concludes with an instructed Eucharist led by the rector. A winter section of this class will meet on Sunday mornings beginning January 28, 2018, and the spring class will meet Wednesday evenings beginning April 4, 2018.

Gentle Yoga | 7 p.m. | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

suggested donation \$10 per class

This class offers easeful postures to open and renew the mind and the body. Using teachings from Swaroopa yoga, Integral yoga, the Alexander Technique, Bones for Life, and mindfulness meditation, the class will lead the student to connect to support, sensation, sound and breath. The student will learn how to integrate the teaching in their daily practice.

THURSDAYS

Gentle Yoga | 8:30 a.m. | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

suggested donation \$10 per class

This class offers easeful postures to open and renew the mind and the body. Using teachings from Swaroopa yoga, Integral yoga, the Alexander Technique, Bones for Life, and mindfulness meditation, the class will lead the student to connect to support, sensation, sound and breath. The student will learn how to integrate the teaching in their daily practice.

Thursday Bible study | 10:30 a.m. | year-round | Led by Gene LeCouteur

This group discusses topics or books of the Bible through in-depth reading of Scripture. We often relate what we read to the world around us, to personal experience, as well to as our hopes for the coming Kingdom of God. No registration is needed.

Book Group | 10:30 a.m. | first Thursday of the month | Led by Wilda Ferguson

This monthly book group selects books to read and discuss based on group interest. The books will have relevant faith components and may indeed challenge us in our faith. The group will begin the fall session on September 7 with a presentation by Becky Lehman of St. Stephen's staff about her recent trip to New Zealand. The group will also decide on books to read for the rest of the year. Come with suggestions.

Into Stillness: Mindfulness Meditation | 10 a.m. | beginning September 21 | beginning students | Led by JoAnn Bibb DeForge

suggested donation \$45 for the four-week course

Mindfulness meditation is valuable for those who are looking for new ways of dealing with stress. Using Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), a proven method for reducing stress, participants will learn to be still and present, which is a key component of wellness and growth in spiritual life.

Moving Meditation | 6 p.m. | resumes September 21 | Led by Matthew Thornton

suggested donation \$15 per class

This class focuses on the relationship between movement and breath through moving meditation. Exercises increase coordination and range of motion while reducing stress and developing greater energy and balance. General control and spatial awareness benefit sport, dance and daily life practices. Matthew is

a movement artist who combines dance, theater, somatic practice, and martial arts. Thornton co-founded Agua Dulce Dance Theater with choreographer and dance artist Alicia Díaz, creating work for concert dance, outdoor environments, and other projects. He taught, performed and choreographed with the world-renowned dance company Pilobolus. He is assistant professor of dance at the University of Richmond.

SATURDAYS

Second Saturdays Centering Prayer | 9 a.m., second Saturday of each month | year-round

Centering prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

Centering prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. Rather, it adds depth of meaning to all prayer and facilitates the movement from more active modes of prayer into a receptive prayer of resting in God. Centering prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God and as a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with him.

The two-hour centering prayer offering at St. Stephen's, which takes place in Room 14, includes some instruction and discussion as well as prayer time. Someone from Contemplative Outreach of Richmond is always present to answer questions and offer guidance for those who desire it. You do not have to come for the entire two-hour period. ❀



Young adults find community at St. Stephen's

Are you in your 20s or 30s? Interested in getting to know other young adults? St. Stephen's Church offers a young adult fellowship that's open to all, whether you're married or single, studying or working or raising children (or some combination of those). You don't have to be a parishioner to take part—and guests are welcome.

Young adults gather on the third Thursday of each month (they call it "Thirds-day") for dinner or a baseball game or some other social activity. They also take part in service projects, sit together at the Sunday Community Supper, and sometimes take part in special offerings such as retreats or hikes.

Perhaps the "glue" for this cohort is a small group gathering on Mondays at 7 p.m. The evening's structure is casual—people mingle for a bit and then study Scripture together, usually following the Lectionary. If you'd like to be reminded of each Monday's gathering, send Matthew Mika an email at uvamika@gmail.com. The reminder will also let you know where that week's group meeting will take place.

"I decided to start attending St. Stephen's because of the active young adults group," says Julia Campus. "Since joining, I've found a group of adults who I've come to call my friends, and look forward to seeing on a regular basis for both spiritual discussion and just plain fun."

Julia calls the young adult group "a close community," and says it's the way she feels connected to the congregation of St. Stephen's.

Be sure to follow Young Adults @ St. Stephen's on Facebook, and sign up for the young adults email newsletter at ststephensRVA.org/email. If you have questions, please contact Sarah-Keel Crews in the parish office, skcrews@ststephensRVA.org, or Matthew Mika. ❀

'Since joining, I've found a group of adults who I've come to call my friends, and look forward to seeing on a regular basis for both spiritual discussion and just plain fun.'

St. Stephen's Calendar 2017-18



Briget Ganske

The annual youth pageant is a highlight of the year; this year's pageant takes place December 17.

This calendar for the 2017-18 program (academic) year includes events we know about as this edition of **Seasons of the Spirit** heads to the printer. Consider keeping this section for your bulletin board or refrigerator door.

This is not an exhaustive listing. Updates to the calendar, as well as additional details about events, are always available on our Web site at ststephensRVA.org, and are publicized in our weekly communications, the **Spirit** and the **eSpirit**. To sign up for the eSpirit, go to ststephensRVA.org/email.

■ Indicates that registration, sign-up or advance tickets advised

September 2017

- 3 | **SUN** Last Sunday for summer worship schedule
- 4 | **Mon** Labor Day; parish office closed
- 9 | **Sat** Training for Palmer Hall servers (adults and children), 10 a.m.
- 10 | **SUN** Rally Day; regular worship schedule, including Palmer Hall service, resumes; training for all who work with children and youth, 3 p.m.
- 11 | **Mon** May Fair House re-opens, 10 a.m.
- 13 | **Wed** Wednesday suppers, Choral Evensong, youth groups resume
- 14 | **Thu** Golf tournament/outreach benefit
- 15 | **Fri** Bluegrass Bash/outreach benefit
- 16 | **Sat** Fred Bahnson and Heber Brown supper and presentation ■
- 17 | **SUN** Sunday school and other Sunday educational offerings resume
Fred Bahnson speaks in Sunday Forum
- 21 | **Thu** Reception for Heidi Schmidt, Monica Vega, Jessica Smith, 6:30 p.m.
- 23 | **Sat** Training for Palmer Hall servers (adults and children), 10 a.m.
- 24 | **SUN** Needlepoint kneelers dedicated; Sunday Forum on outreach
- 25 | **Mon** Fall Covenant Period begins
- 27 | **Wed** Fall Inquirers Class begins ■
- 30 | **Sat** Healing Prayer Ministers workshop, 8:30 a.m.-noon
Holy Baptism, 10:30 a.m.

October 2017

- 1 | **SUN** Fall ingathering of United Thank Offering;
Rector's Fall Series I in Sunday Forum
- 5 | **Thu** Poetry Series: Gabriel Fried, 7 p.m.
- 8 | **SUN** Rector's Fall Series II in Sunday Forum
Blessing of Animals service, 3 p.m.
- 15 | **SUN** Sunday Forum: Denise Thomas Brown
- 19 | **Thu** John Phillip Newell, 7 p.m. ■
- 21 | **Sat** CARITAS guests arrive
- 22 | **SUN** Youth attend 8 a.m. service and go to Busch Gardens ■
John Philip Newell preaches at 9 & 11:15 a.m. services,
speaks in Forum, gives reflection at 5:30 p.m. service
- 28 | **Sat** CARITAS guests depart
- 29 | **SUN** Rector's Fall Series III in Sunday Forum

November 2017

- 1 | **Wed** All Saints' Day; service at noon
- 2 | **Thu** Poetry Series: Tarfia Faizullah, 7 p.m.
- 5 | **SUN** Daylight Saving Time ends, 2 a.m.
All Saints' Sunday; Holy Baptism at 9 a.m. in Palmer Hall, 11:15 a.m.
in main church; Rector's Fall Series IV in Sunday Forum
Turkey box drive begins
- 11 | **Sat** Lock-in (grades 6-8) ■
- 12 | **SUN** Rector's Fall Series V in Sunday Forum
- 15 | **Wed** Instructed Eucharist, 6:30 p.m.
- 19 | **SUN** Rector's Fall Series VI in Sunday Forum; Deadline for turkey boxes
- 22 | **Wed** No Wonderful Wednesdays supper
- 23 | **Thu** Thanksgiving Day; service at 10:30 a.m.; parish office closed
- 24 | **Fri** Parish office closed
- 25 | **Sat** Farmers market moves indoors (9 a.m.-noon)
- 26 | **SUN** Rector's Fall Series VII in Sunday Forum;
Advent Fair; Angel Tree drive begins
- 27 | **Mon** Holiday Memorial Service, 7 p.m.
Last week of fall Covenant Period

December 2017

- 1 | **Fri** LARCUM (Lutheran-Anglican-Roman Catholic-United Methodist) conference at St. Stephen's
- 2 | **Sat** Advent retreat with Martin Laird ■
- 3 | **SUN** Advent I; Martin Laird in Sunday Forum
- 10 | **SUN** Advent II; Sunday Forum: Conversation with the Rector
Angel Tree gifts due
- 13 | **Wed** Last Wonderful Wednesdays supper until January
- 16 | **Sat** Children's pageant, 3 p.m.
- 17 | **SUN** Advent III; Youth pageant, 11:15 a.m.
- 24 | **SUN** Advent IV: one morning service, 10 a.m.
Christmas Eve: services at 3, 5, 8 and 11 p.m.
- 25 | **Mon** Christmas Day: one service, 10:30 a.m.; parish office closed
- 26 | **Tue** St. Stephen's Day; parish office closed
- 31 | **SUN** Christmas I; Lessons and Carols service

January 2018

- 1 | **Mon** New Year's Day; parish office closed
- 7 | **SUN** Holy Baptism, 9 a.m. in Palmer Hall, 11:15 a.m. in main church
No Sunday Forum
- 8 | **Mon** Winter Covenant Period begins
- 10 | **Wed** Wonderful Wednesdays supper resumes
- 15 | **Mon** Martin Luther King Jr. Day; parish office closed
- 21 | **SUN** Lucinda Laird, guest preacher, Sunday Forum speaker
- 24 | **Wed** Poetry series: Natasha Trethewey, 7 p.m. ■
- 28 | **SUN** Winter Inquirers Class begins

February 2018

- 4 | **SUN** Annual parish meeting and vestry elections
- 10 | **Sat** Holy Baptism, 10:30 a.m.
- 13 | **Tue** Shrove Tuesday pancake supper
- 14 | **Wed** Ash Wednesday: services at 7:30 a.m., noon, 5:30 p.m.;
no Wonderful Wednesdays activities
- 16 | **Fri** Lenten Retreat led by Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE
- 17 | **Sat** Lenten Retreat led by Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE
- 18 | **SUN** Lent I; Forum speaker: Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE
- 25 | **SUN** Lent II

March 2018

- 1 | **Thu** Women's Retreat at Society of St. John the Evangelist (through Sunday, March 4) ■
- 4 | **SUN** Lent III
- 11 | **SUN** Lent IV; Daylight Saving Time begins
- 12 | **Mon** Last week of winter Covenant Period
- 14 | **Wed** Instructed Eucharist, 6:30 p.m.
- 15 | **Thu** Poetry series: Molly McCully Brown, 7 p.m.
- 17 | **Sat** Workshop, the Rev. Becca Stevens ■
- 18 | **SUN** Becca Stevens speaks in Sunday Forum
- 19 | **Mon** Spring Covenant Period begins
- 25 | **SUN** Palm Sunday; services at 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.; no Sunday Forum
- 29 | **Thu** Maundy Thursday; service at 7:30 p.m. followed by all-night vigil
- 30 | **Fri** Good Friday; service, noon; Stations of the Cross, 5:30 p.m.
- 31 | **Sat** The Great Vigil of Easter with adult baptisms, 7:30 p.m.



Palm Sunday

April 2018

- 1 | **SUN** Easter; services at 7:30 a.m., 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m., 5:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.; no Sunday Forum
- 2 | **Mon** Parish office closed
- 4 | **Wed** Spring Inquirers Class begins
- 6 | **Fri** Carrie Newcomer concert ■
- 7 | **Sat** Farmers market moves outdoors (8 a.m.-noon)
- 12 | **Thu** Poetry series: Neil Perry, 7 p.m.
- 13 | **Fri** Canterbury Cathedral Choir concert ■
- 21 | **Sat** Holy Baptism, 10:30 a.m.

May 2018

- 16 | **Wed** Instructed Eucharist; last Wonderful Wednesdays supper until fall
- 19 | **Sat** Holy Baptism, 10:30 a.m.
- 20 | **SUN** Pentecost; Bishop's visit with confirmation (tentative)
- 21 | **Mon** Last week of spring Covenant Period
- 25 | **Fri** May Fair House closes for the summer, 3 p.m.
- 27 | **SUN** Trinity Sunday; summer worship schedule begins
- 28 | **Mon** Memorial Day; parish office closed

June 2018

- 22 | **Fri** Parish weekend at Shrine Mont (through Sunday) ■
- 30 | **Sat** Holy Baptism, 10:30 a.m. (will also be offered Saturday, August 11, at 10:30 a.m.)

Lift up your hearts

'Sursum corda' is theme of rector's series in Sunday Forum this fall

In addition to several stimulating guest speakers, this fall's Sunday Forum will include a series led by the rector, "Sursum Corda: Responding Faithfully to the World" (see cover article). The forum meets in the Large Fellowship Hall at 10:10 a.m.; no registration is needed and all are welcome.

October 1 | Experience the joy: Philippians 1-2

"Go out into the world uncorrupted as a breath of fresh air in this squalid and polluted society. Provide people with a glimpse of good living, and of the living God." So Eugene Peterson translates a couple of verses from Philippians in *The Message*. This letter, known as the "epistle of joy," is appointed to be read for three Sundays in a row this fall. Its infectious joy illustrates that Christianity is not a religion of a book but a religion of a person, ultimately a religion of people, including you and me.

October 8 | The life-changing magic of tidying up: Philippians 3-4

About living joyfully, Paul seems to think we have a choice. Just as the priest says, "Lift up your hearts!" so Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Many in our culture are advising us to shed what we do not need as a way of recognizing what is essential. In the words of Eugene Peterson's *The Message*, Paul says, "All the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him."



October 29 | Beyond the stone façade
The Gothic cathedral of the Middle Ages was thought to mirror heaven and shape those who worshipped there. How might we be formed by symbolic spaces like St. Stephen's that are descended from a spirituality of the Middle Ages? Why were people like J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis so drawn to the medieval imagination? We'll look at some of the shaping symbols found in Gothic cathedrals, as well as in our own beloved worship space.

November 5 | Anchors, tethers, touchstones
What keeps us connected to God, to soul, to our true life, and to deeper relationships with each other? "How can we know the way?" Benedict of Nursia was alarmed by the social and cultural decay he found in Rome, and his

concern led him to develop a Rule of Life that ended up grounding and centering Christianity through the Dark Ages. What can ground and center us? In the face of cultural decay, should we retreat from the world, or engage with it? Are we "yeast in the dough," or "yeast on a shelf"?

November 12, 19, 26 | The pull of distraction, the pull of prayer
Are we really "a wicked and adulterous generation," or was Jesus just having a bad day? (Matthew 12:39 and 16:4). Jesus, of course, was talking about our marriage to God. Are we still too easily drawn away from our relationship with our life-giving God? We'll look at tried-and-true Christian spiritual practices for a more centered Christian life in the 21st century.

December 10 | A conversation with the rector; final Sunday Forum of 2017 ❀

GUEST SPEAKERS IN THE SUNDAY FORUM

September 17 | Mr. Fred Bahnsen, author of *Soil and Sacrament*

October 15 | Ms. Denise Thomas Brown, McShin Foundation

October 22 | The Rev. John Philip Newell, authority on Celtic spirituality

December 3 | Father Martin Laird, author of *Into the Silent Land*

January 21 | The Very Rev. Lucinda Laird, Dean, American Cathedral in Paris

February 18 | Br. Luke Ditewig, Society of St. John the Evangelist

March 18 | The Rev. Becca Stevens, Magdalene and Thistle Farms



Denise Thomas Brown



Lucinda Laird



Becca Stevens

More speakers!

In addition to the speakers listed elsewhere in this edition of **Seasons of the Spirit**, two groups offer monthly programs at St. Stephen's, the Women of St. Stephen's and the Men's Breakfast fellowship.

The Women's Forum

All women and their guests are cordially invited to the Women's Forum each month October through May, with a break in January. Most programs take place in the Fellowship Hall at 10 a.m., preceded by coffee, refreshments, and conversation at 9:30. Those that take place at other times and locations are noted. Unless an event includes a meal, there is no charge and no registration required. Questions about the Women of St. Stephen's may be addressed to Marilyn Kirkpatrick, president, mskirkpatrick@verizon.net.

October 3, 2017 (refreshments at 9:30 a.m., program at 10) Restoration of the Reredos and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit
Elizabeth Fulton and Lorraine Brevi will tell the story, with visuals, of this restoration project at St. Stephen's.

November 7, 2017 (refreshments at 9:30 a.m., program at 10) Miracle on N. 31st Street: Church Hill Activities and Tutoring
Stephen Weir, executive director of Church Hill Activities and Tutoring, will share this success story and tell us about the people who make it happen.

December 5, 2017 (program at 11 a.m., followed by lunch) Advent and Christmas Music Program
Michael Simpson, director of Celtic musicians and of the Compline choir at St. Stephen's, will present seasonal music with two vocalists. Lunch follows the program. A sign-up sheet will be available at Information Central and in the May Fair House beginning in November. Payment for lunch is made at the door.

January—no program

February 1, 2018 (reception, dinner, program begin at 6 p.m.) Ladies Night Out
This year's program will be an adaptation of a one-woman play, "A Song in the Wilderness."

March 6, 2018 (refreshments at 9:30 a.m., program at 10) The Story of the Nature Conservancy
Michael L. Lipford, Southern Division Director of the Nature Conservancy

April 3, 2018 (refreshments at 9:30 a.m., program at 10) Ethiopian Icons and Coptic Christianity
The Rev. Vienna Cobb Anderson will tell her story of becoming a collector of Ethiopian icons and crosses. The Rev. William L. Sachs will give a short history of Coptic Christianity.

May 8, 2018 (10:30 a.m.) Service and lunch at Roslyn
Please note that this is the second Tuesday of the month (not the first, our usual pattern), and we gather at Roslyn. There will be a celebration of Holy Eucharist in the Bishop's Chapel followed by a light luncheon on the grounds of the diocesan conference center, 8727 River Road.

The Men's Breakfast

The Men's Breakfast takes place on the second Thursday of the month, September-May; breakfast is served at 7:15 a.m. in the large Fellowship Hall, and the featured speaker concludes no later than 8:30 a.m. Women are welcome to attend. Payment for breakfast is made at the door (\$7 per person). Questions? Please contact Jack Williams, 804.347.4435.

September 14 | Marshall Orr, parishioner and business consultant, Industry Specialist Consultants

October 12 | Nadine Marsh-Carter, President, Children's Home Society of Virginia, member of Richmond City School Board

November 9 | Dominic Barrett, Executive Director, Shalom Farms

December 14 | K Alferio, President, Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen

January 11, 2018 | Karen O'Brien, Chief Operating Officer, CARITAS

February 8 | Matt Thornhill, founder and managing partner of SIR's Institute for Tomorrow, a think tank based in Richmond

March 8 | The Rev. David Cox, author, *The Religious Life of Robert E. Lee*

April 12 | Frank Atkinson, Chairman of McGuireWoods Consulting

May 10 | Bob Bryant, Ascent Energy Partners

New choirs added to our music ministry



Briget Ganske

Virginia Girls Choir

“He (or she) who sings, prays twice,” the saying goes. Everyone at St. Stephen’s is invited to help make music that glorifies God. There are choirs for almost every age, as well as a handbell choir for adults (no previous experience required), and opportunities for instrumentalists to share their gifts. This fall, we’re introducing two new choirs, and refining the age ranges for others.

After discussion with parents and youngsters alike, we’ve decided to offer a middle school choir for boys and girls in grades 5 through 8, led by Dawn Childs. Though we will no longer offer the Virginia Boys Choir, those who sang in that choir will find this one a suitable alternative. The middle school choir will sing at Sunday morning services (sometimes in Palmer Hall, sometimes in the main church), and their rehearsals will also take place on Sundays, during the Sunday school period. These rehearsal periods will include Christian education that relates to the texts the choir is singing.

An *a capella* choir for high school students is also in the works, to be led by Kerry Court, who says, “Think Pentatonix.” Details for this coed group are TBA, but it will be fun! Contact Kerry, kcourt@ststephensRVA.org, if you (or someone you know) wants to audition or learn more about the group.

Auditions for the Virginia Girls Choir—now for girls in grades 5 through 12—took place over the summer, but it’s not too late to audition. Contact Kerry Court for information.

Adults who love to sing but don’t have time for weekly rehearsals: remember the Hymn Choir who sings once a month during the 9 a.m. services and rehearses right before the service. Contact Chris Edwards, cedwards@ststephensRVA.org, to volunteer or learn more.

Here’s an overview of the choirs at St. Stephen’s Church.

YOUNG CHILDREN

Cherub Choir: Grades K-1 | Rehearsals, Wednesdays, 6:30-7:00 | sings at 9:00 a.m. Palmer Hall service several times annually; contact Dawn Childs, dchilds@ststephensRVA.org.

Palmer Hall Choir: Grades 2-4 | Rehearsals, Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00 | sings at 9:00 a.m. Palmer Hall service weekly; contact Dawn Childs.



Nathan Childs

Palmer Hall choirs



Sarah Bartenstein

Sanctuary

OLDER CHILDREN AND YOUTH

NEW! Middle School Choir: Grades 5-8 | Rehearsals, Sundays, 10:10-11 a.m. | sings at Sunday morning services; contact Dawn Childs.

Virginia Girls Choir: grades 5-12 | Rehearsals, Wednesdays, 5:10-8:00, and Sundays after 11:15 service until 1:00 | sings Sunday mornings, Wednesday Evensong at 5:30 p.m., and at other times (auditioned); contact Kerry Court

NEW! A capella choir for high school students: additional details TBA (auditioned); contact Kerry Court

ADULTS (INCLUDING SENIOR HIGH STUDENTS)

Hymn Choir: Adolescents and adults | sings once a month at the 9 a.m. service, with rehearsal immediately before the service; contact Chris Edwards

St. Stephen’s Choir: Adolescents and adults | Rehearsals, Thursdays, 7:30-9:15 | Sings at 9 a.m. or 11:15 a.m. service on Sundays, and at 10 a.m. summer Sunday service (auditioned); contact Chris Edwards

Sanctuary: Compline Choir, staff singers and volunteers | Rehearsals, Sundays, 6:45-7:50 p.m., plus one Monday monthly, 7:30-9:30 | sings at Compline service, 8:00 p.m. Sundays (auditioned); contact Michael Simpson, simpsonmc2010@hotmail.com.

INSTRUMENTS

Bell Choir: Adult handbell ensemble | Rehearsals, Tuesdays, 6:00-7:00; contact Susan Weis, susanweis@icloud.com.

Instrumentalists are invited to contact Greg Vick, gvick@ststephensRVA.org, to discuss playing during preludes at our Sunday morning services.

Celtic service musicians are selected and directed by Michael Simpson. ❁



Canterbury Cathedral Choir to sing here

World-renowned choir will give concert at St. Stephen's April 13

The famed choir of Canterbury Cathedral will give a concert at St. Stephen's on **Friday, April 13, 2018**.

More details will be available soon, including how to obtain tickets, but mark your calendars now for this exciting concert.

Members of St. Stephen's will provide housing for the visiting choristers; more details on that opportunity will be available soon, as well.

The Choir of Canterbury Cathedral sings at the daily services in the historic cathedral, providing music which enchants and delights the many thousands of visitors and pilgrims from all over the world, as well as the regular congregation. As the seat of the

archbishop of Canterbury—the titular head of the Anglican Communion—the cathedral has a unique role in the life of the church worldwide. Canterbury Cathedral is also a World Heritage Site.

The choir's conductor is Dr. David Flood, Organist and Master of the Choristers. Straight after university at Oxford and then Cambridge, Dr. Flood was appointed assistant organist at Canterbury Cathedral, a post he held for eight years. In 1986 he was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral and in 1988 returned to Canterbury as Organist and Master of the Choristers. He has given organ recitals in France, Germany, Holland, Australia, New Zealand and the United States, and studied with Gillian Weir and Jean Langlais.

Considered one of the leading choir trainers of the United Kingdom, Dr. Flood directed the music for the enthronements of three archbishops—Carey, Williams and Welby—and for two Lambeth Conferences, the worldwide gathering of Anglican bishops that takes place once each decade.

The choristers who travel are ages 9-13 (though younger boys sing with the choir in residence at the cathedral). They live in the ancient and beautiful Cathedral Choir House and attend St. Edmund's School. Each chorister learns to play at least two instruments in addition to choral training. Choir practice takes place every day, early in the morning before school and again before Evensong, and the choir performs music from the widest repertoire, medieval to modern.

The boys find a tremendous fulfillment in performing and quickly become comfortable singing the big solo on the big occasion: anything from an archbishop's enthronement to a royal visit to a Christmas service with more than 4,000 in the congregation.

Other members of the choir—known as Lay Clerks—are professionally trained singers who pursue other careers outside the cathedral. Many are teachers, while others are in commerce or other fields. They sing seven services each week in the cathedral, and many have made arrangements with their employers to join the tour that brings the choir to Richmond next spring.

In recent years the choir has toured in France, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Malta, Canada and the United States. These trips, along with television and radio appearances and recording CDs, are some of the many exciting bonuses of a boy's time as a chorister. The experience lives with them forever as does the training which is second to none.

Be sure to save the date to hear this outstanding choir at St. Stephen's Church and stay tuned for how you can help make their stay in Richmond a comfortable one. ❀



One of last year's Music Makers classes

Music Makers classes offer fun, healthy interaction for adult and child

Fall semester begins September 7

Parents know it's important to their child's development to interact with them from day one. Even before their children can talk, many parents read to them. Early childhood music experiences are important, too, and can have a positive effect on childhood development. St. Stephen's Church offers "Music Makers," a program for very young

children—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers—that encourages this healthy interaction between parent and child.

Aside from providing an enjoyable experience for you and your child, these classes offer other important benefits. Numerous studies have shown that music

Like reading and other activities, early childhood music experiences are important, and can have a positive effect on development.

instruction can enhance learning in other areas of a child's development. Singing, listening, and moving involve several different skill sets. Areas that can benefit from such activities include communication skills and language development, spatial-temporal skills, even higher test scores.

These classes are meant to be taken with a parent or other caregiver. Created and taught by Dawn Childs, St. Stephen's assistant for children's music ministry, the early childhood music classes at St. Stephen's incorporate the best concepts of several world-renowned early childhood music and movement curricula. Children have the opportunity to participate in age-appropriate activities such as singing, dancing, listening, chanting, and playing simple instruments in order to touch on all areas of development. Music classes will help your child explore language, develop listening skills, build confidence, and use their creativity—all while fostering their natural love of music.

The fall semester begins September 7 and runs through December 15. Sections are offered for infants (age 6 months through 17 months), toddlers (18 months-age 3) and preschoolers (age 3-pre-K). Each section includes 12 classes, with an extra week built in for make-ups or absences. Space is limited, so register as soon as possible at ststephensRVA.org/musicmakers. You do not need to be a member of St. Stephen's Church to participate.

If you have questions, please contact Dawn at dchilds@ststephensRVA.org. ❀

The work of our hands

Many hands make light work, the saying goes, and indeed many hands work to create and maintain the beauty of holiness that characterizes St. Stephen's Church, ensuring not only that things are lovely to look at but in their proper place. Naturally much of this happens behind the scenes, "off camera," away from the spotlight, so that each service, event or offering may happen seamlessly...though it does not happen effortlessly.



By Ben Nelson

In medieval times, artisans formed associations called "guilds" to oversee the practice of their craft—in some ways, like the professional associations we have now. Today at St. Stephen's, several guilds perform important ministries while sharing their knowledge with those who want to learn these skills, enjoy the fellowship offered by the group and serve the church.

No liturgy takes place at St. Stephen's without the touch of the **Altar Guild**. Every baptism, funeral, wedding, Evensong and Sunday service is tended by members on rotating teams. Volunteers like Fern Newsom, who has chaired or co-chaired the Altar Guild for 14 or 15 years (she's not sure!) pass on their expertise to each new member. They lovingly polish silver, wash and iron linens, count communion wafers, fill cruets and prepare communion kits for visits by clergy, lay eucharistic visitors and our jail chaplains.

"Being part of the Altar Guild is one of the joys of my life," says Fern. "I love the different services we have at St. Stephen's, the members of the guild are like family and the church staff and clergy are always available when help is needed. I've learned so much about my church, myself and my faith."

The **Flower Guild** formed after our centennial flower festival held in May 2011, shares space with the Altar Guild in the sacristy. In fact, at one time, the Altar Guild was not only responsible for preparing the altar for worship, they also had the task of preparing flowers. But the enthusiasm generated by the flower festival, and the knowledge that many churches and cathedrals had a separate guild for this function, led to the current structure. Flower Guild members are responsible for selecting, ordering and arranging fresh flowers, Christmas greenery, or whatever the season calls for, in the church. This provides an additional element of beauty to the altar and chapels while reflecting seasonal changes, both those in nature and those in the liturgical year.

These guilds do their work on a weekly (sometimes daily) basis to prepare our sacred spaces. Others focus on producing lasting expressions, including the newer Needlepoint Guild and Icon Guild.

When you kneel to pray in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, take a moment to notice the intricately designed and hand-stitched cushion on the kneeler of your cathedral chair (the chairs are a new feature in the chapel since our renovation). This is the work of the **Needlepoint Guild**. Each kneeler in the chapel has been dedicated in memory of a loved one, or to honor someone still living, indicated on a plaque on the underside of each kneeler. Just as each design is unique, so was each person's reason for being involved and working to make sure each stitch was perfectly in place.

For parishioner Sally Lester, "The opportunity to produce something in lasting memory of another struck a chord." Another stitcher, Jane Settle, was attracted to the contemplative aspect of this activity: "It's peaceful work." She says, "To sit quietly and focus with a purpose is prayerful and meditative." Oth-



Briget Ganske

Flower Guild members prepare the nave for Christmas. ers came to the group to learn from expert stitchers. They were tutored and now continue enthusiastically on their own projects while awaiting the beginning of the guild's next project, stitching the cushions for the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

The official dedication of the Holy Spirit kneelers will take place **Sunday, September 24**.

The **Icon Guild** formed when several students in the annual icon workshop taught by Suzanne Schleck (which took place for the seventh time in July) wanted to continue writing icons year-round. (Icons are said to be "written" rather than "painted.") In the fall of 2013 they decided to gather regularly to master what they had learned. Suzanne continues to offer her guidance when needed and though the work is individual, the group as a whole supports each other through each step.

"One does not need to be an artist to write an icon," says Ruth Partlow, a member of the group. It is more a "spiritual discipline, done with prayer, reflection and care," she notes.

When the group gathers, usually on Friday mornings, they begin with prayer and anointing their hands with oil, as they learned to do from Suzanne. They are then ready to begin their work, which is often accompanied by meditative music. What is done with the finished icon is up to each iconographer. Some are donated or gifted and some remain with the icon writer.

Many other groups at St. Stephen's also work with their hands as a ministry to others, including the **prayer shawl knitters** who meet on Wednesday evenings to create pieces that provide warmth and comfort as a tangible expression of the parish's love and prayers for those who are ill, homebound, or otherwise in need. **Lay eucharistic visitors** and **healing prayer ministers** bring the power of touch to their ministries of prayer. **Kitchen volunteers** chop and measure and stir on behalf of the May Fair House, the Sunday Community Supper and the Wonderful Wednesdays supper and other meals. **Visual artists** display their work in the Fellowship Hall. The **HANDS ministry** makes home repairs for those who need assistance.

Through the work of these hands, the people of St. Stephen's are nourished and sustained.

*Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us
And prosper for us the work of our hands—
O prosper the work of our hands!*

— Psalm 90:17

Ben Nelson, our longest-serving sexton, is also the coordinator and chef for our Sunday Community Supper. He has a degree in English and creative writing from Virginia Commonwealth University.

CONTACTS

All groups are open to both men and women.

Altar Guild

No prior experience is needed; we will train you. Contact: Fern Newsom, fdn11@verizon.net or 804.288.9461

Flower Guild

Flower arranging knowledge/experience is helpful. Contact: Allison Fauls, flowerguild@ststephensRVA.org or 804.741.3474

Needlepoint Guild

No needlework experience necessary to be part of the group; members teach new members, and you do not need to be working on a St. Stephen's project to stitch with the group on Fridays at 9 a.m. Kneelers for the Chapel of the Good Shepherd require experience and a work sample. Contact: Robyn Kay, rrkay1@gmail.com, 804.288.9043

Icon Guild

Since this group does not include an icon instructor, participants should have taken at least one of Suzanne Schleck's icon workshops or another workshop or class. Contact: Ruth Partlow, rugpart@aol.com or 804.320.0792

Knitters Group

No experience necessary; the group meets Wednesdays during the program year, following the Wonderful Wednesdays supper. Contact: Molly Johnson, mmpjohnson@verizon.net or 804.355.9543 or Anne Townsend, anne.townsend@comcast.net or 804.364.6337.

Art Exhibits

Open to St. Stephen's painters, photographers and other visual artists. Contact: Emma Lou Martin, elmbluem@hotmail.com or 804.285.8170

Lay Eucharistic Visitors; Healing Prayer Ministers

Those called to these ministries are provided with orientation and ongoing training. Contact: Penny Nash, pnash@ststephensRVA.org

Cooking

May Fair House: Eileen Walker, 804.359.2227
Wonderful Wednesdays Suppers; Stan Barnett, sbarnett@ststephensRVA.org; Sunday Community Suppers; Ben Nelson, bnelson@ststephensRVA.org, or Penny Nash, pnash@ststephensRVA.org

HANDS (Hammers and Nails in Devoted Service) Ministry

Contact Deb Lawrence, dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org, or Matthew Mika, uvamika@gmail.com. 🍀

A vibrant season

Summer at St. Stephen's Church

In many churches, summer is a time to slow down. Way down. At St. Stephen's, we do modify our Sunday worship schedule, and many groups, classes and activities take the summer off. But many other things step in to take their place in the life of this vibrant church, including Vacation Bible School, a youth mission trip, choir camp for new and returning members of the Virginia Girls Choir, a weekend retreat at Shrine Mont, a math camp to help Peter Paul Development Center students keep their academic skills honed when school is out, the annual icon workshop, training for prospective Catechesis of the Good Shepherd catechists (the name for adult guides) and much more. Undergirding it all is the continuing rhythm of prayer, 365 days a year: the Holy Eucharist on Saturdays and Sundays, sung Compline on Sundays, daily Morning Prayer and Evensong on weekdays. Pictured below are some of the wonderful, refreshing, life-giving summer offerings at St. Stephen's in 2017.

All photos by Briget Ganske



Participants in this year's parish retreat at Shrine Mont reflected on the importance of Sabbath, led by new associate rector Steve McGehee, who was visiting the diocesan conference center for the first time! Children and youth had programs, as well, led by Sarah-Keel Crews. This weekend is for all ages—individuals, couples, and families. Next year's weekend takes place June 22-24, 2018.



The seventh annual icon workshop was filled to capacity. Women and men from this and other parishes, from Richmond and beyond, learned from master iconographer Suzanne Schleck.



It wasn't all Popsicle sticks and glitter at Vacation Bible School, which included active play, singing, and time in the atria of our Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program. This year's theme was "Digging for Treasure: Parables Revealed." Beth Thurmond and a wonderful group of volunteers made it happen.



Summer breaks can allow kids to forget some of what they learned during the previous school year. To help students in Peter Paul Development Center's summer program sharpen their math skills before school resumes, St. Stephen's offers an annual week-long day camp. Certified teachers provide instruction, St. Stephen's volunteers provide meals, and students receive math kits to take home for keeps.



One of the best things about summer? Delicious produce for supper, served outdoors during our Sunday Community Suppers. This year we offered hot dogs, as well, for discerning younger palates. Games on the lawn added to the fun.



Two annual week-long workshops train adults to serve in Level One and Level Two atria (classrooms) in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Our own catechists, as well as those from other churches, learn from one of the very best trainers available, Anna Hurdle (center) of St. Peter's, Charlotte, here at St. Stephen's.

A short drive to another world

Summer mission trip provides youth with in-depth look at the 'other' Richmond By Michael Sweeney



Tomato yield at Shalom Farms

Three rising juniors, three rising seniors, and two adult chaperones participated in a local mission and retreat in late July, spending the first three nights at Richmond Hill (an ecumenical Christian retreat center located in Church Hill), joining the residents and other guests in communal meals and three times of prayer—morning, noon and night. The second half of the week, the group stayed in the beautiful new yurts at Pocahontas State Park, preparing their own meals and enjoying God's presence in the beauty of nature.

Over the course of the week, the group walked the Slave Trail, heard a presentation from Professor John Moeser about the creation of Richmond's highways and public housing, and learned about St. Stephen's jail ministry from Carol Dickinson and Robert Dilday. They visited ChildSavers, the Anna Julia Cooper School and the Peter Paul Development Center. They learned about the work of Shalom Farms where they picked tomatoes and washed potatoes. And back at St. Stephen's, the group packed bags in the food pantry and distributed them to the clients who come every Monday afternoon.

It was the first afternoon of the trip, and our group sat around a few tables at Captain Buzzy's, a café on East Broad in Church Hill, where we were escaping the scorching July sun, enjoying iced coffee drinks, smoothies and milkshakes.

"Doesn't it feel like we're in a different city?" someone asked, referring to the cobblestone streets, the brick sidewalks, the views from the hill and the café itself—its high tin ceiling, stained glass windows and pleasantly mismatched furniture. Someone else said it felt a little bit like San Francisco. And another found hints of Europe.

It would be the theme of the trip: discovering an unfamiliar city right here in Richmond. Sometimes the discovery was delightful—as at Captain Buzzy's or in the gardens of Richmond Hill—and oftentimes it was challenging. The trip had begun with a driving tour of Richmond's East End, expertly narrated by Damon Jiggetts and Danielle Ripperton, the executive director and director of development, respectively, at the Peter Paul Development Center.

As I drove the St. Stephen's bus past Creighton Court, one of the four public housing developments on a tour that covered about one square mile, Damon pointed out all the stop signs. As the driver, I was very aware of them, but he wanted to be sure that everyone noticed. "They're new," he said, "and the police watch them very closely." He explained that anyone who rolls through a stop sign gets pulled over; it creates an opportunity for the car to be searched. I thought about all the stop signs in the blocks surrounding St. Stephen's, how rarely I come to a complete stop, how I've never once worried about being pulled over for it. We were in a different city.

That evening, we reflected on the first day, sharing the moments that stood out. One young person held up the inspiration that she'd felt in meeting Mary Thompson, an 80-year-old African-American woman, lifelong resident of Richmond's East End and founder of the New Vision Civic Association. Ms. Thompson gave us a walking tour of Nine Mile Road, focusing especially on the intersection of Nine Mile and 25th Street, where she proudly showed us the recently landscaped intersection and the Family Dollar store that she and others worked so hard to bring to their community in the 1990s. And she pointed with hopeful conviction to an empty plot of land across the roundabout from the Family Dollar, the place where she expects one day to see the neighborhood's first grocery store. As Ms. Thompson described the current situation—two bus rides to the nearest grocery store—I thought about how often I drive the half-mile from St. Stephen's parking lot to Libbie Market because it's hot out.

Another member of the group shared something he'd heard in evening prayer. The officiant, while leading the daily prayers for metropolitan Richmond, asked that God would work in us and through us for the healing of division. Referencing a recent Michael Paul Williams piece in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, he acknowledged that we are two cities: RVA and Richmond, the one hip and flourishing and the other "mired in violence and decay." This distinction between RVA and Richmond—"That really hit me," the young St. Stephen's parishioner said; "I'd never thought of that."

That was the purpose of the trip: to think of things we'd never thought of and see things we'd never seen. For folks on a mission trip, we did very little work with our hands. We spent one morning at Shalom Farms and another at St. Stephen's food pantry, but most of our work happened in heart and mind, in prayer and reflection. And work definitely happened there.

Each night we'd watch a portion of the Netflix documentary *13th*, whose title is a reference to the constitutional amendment which abolished slavery "except as punishment for crime." The film helped to provide a broader context for all that we were learning in the East End, how the interconnected issues of race, education, poverty and the criminal justice system have shaped not only Richmond, but the nation.

This incredible group did the most difficult thing human beings can do: set down one's own cherished ideas and opinions long enough to truly listen.

At the end of the trip, one young man admitted how his heart and mind had been challenged and changed by *13th*.

"The first night I hated it," he said, and explained how upset he'd been by the unfavorable portrayal of a president he really liked. (Spoiler alert: *13th* doesn't flatter any recent presidents, regardless of party or politics.) His reaction to the second night amounted roughly to "Hmmm." By the end of the third and final installment, he was sharing it as one of his "highs" of the whole trip.

While the trip provided plenty of real reasons for despair, it ultimately felt deeply hopeful. The prayers at Richmond Hill were beautiful. Singing "Amazing Grace" around the campfire at Pocahontas State Park was stirring. But most powerful was witnessing this incredible group of 16- and 17-year-olds doing over and over again the most difficult thing for human beings to do: to set down one's own cherished ideas and opinions long enough to truly listen.

This was the kind of mission trip Jesus proposed when he said, "First take the log out of your own eye." (Matthew 7:5) We didn't have to travel far to see a different city. ❀

Editor's note: St. Stephen's will offer an abridged version of this trip for adults in spring 2018, led by Michael Sweeney and outreach director Deb Lawrence. More information will be available soon.

Big hearts in the Big Apple

By Sarah-Keel Crews

Each year, a group of rising ninth graders from St. Stephen's and their chaperones travel to New York City. Many (though not all) have been to the city before with their parents or school groups to see the sights—Times Square, Central Park, the Statue of Liberty and so on.

This trip, however, is meant to expose young people to less glamorous parts of New York. In this bustling, sometimes overwhelming metropolis, they learn to cope with the unfamiliar, the unexpected and the uncomfortable. While they do get to see a show (this year's crew took in the Blue Man Group) most of their time is spent on things like visiting the 9/11 museum, worshiping in a local church and serving in a soup kitchen. They stayed, not in the Plaza or the Ritz, but in cramped rooms in a hostel.

During their stay, the group rose early to serve more than 200 people during the breakfast shift, 7:30-9:30 a.m., at the well-known Bowery Mission.

Founded in 1879, the Bowery Mission provides help and hope to New York's homeless and impoverished men, women and children. The mission exists to help these people, caught in cycles of poverty, hopelessness and dependencies of many kinds, "to see their lives transformed to hope, joy, lasting productivity and eternal life through the power of Jesus Christ."



The group outside the well-known mission where they served a meal.

This year, the St. Stephen's group included seven boys and girls, as well as chaperones Sarah-Keel Crews, Sean Dobb, Gene LeCouteur and Arden Locher. ❀

Learning on the job

Growing up, my brother Jamie and I were charged with setting the dinner table. Out of the cupboard we'd take placemats, cloth napkins in matching rings, candlesticks and cutlery.

It wasn't fancy. Grandma had salvaged the cupboard from the dump. The silverware was stainless; the placemats were usually not. And the candlesticks—too wide for the tapers Mom bought at Stop & Shop—were stuffed with Kleenex so the candles would stand up straight.



By Michael Sweeney

Still, there was a formality about it, a sense of ritual. Milk was served always out of a pitcher, never the plastic jug. Chilled tap water was served in a gallon-sized glass container. The margarine, with its cheap plastic packaging, was hidden inside a small pewter tub.

And there were rules, like no toys at the table and no food before the blessing. Even if the gratitude was sometimes feigned, we would begin the meal by saying, "God is great, God is good, and we thank him for our food."

At some point in my 20s, on a visit home, I realized that my parents had stopped saying the blessing. Other things had changed too, of course. The handle had fallen off the old pitcher. Milk wasn't even on the table anymore. The size of margarine containers had grown, making the pewter tub obsolete, and leaving the "I Can't Believe It's Not Butter" exposed for all to not believe. New candlesticks, properly sized, required no Kleenex padding.

But it was the absence of giving thanks that kindled my outrage. If my parents truly cared about saying grace, why did they stop as soon as Jamie and I were out of earshot? And if they didn't really care about it, then why do it? I felt deceived. I wanted my parents to say grace forever or never to have said it at all.

Now I'm deep into my 30s, and my wife Briget and I have become parents. This cured my outrage pretty quickly. I'd like to say that we say grace every night, but we don't. Some nights the best we can do is to get Emmett to the table in that narrow window of time between when he realizes he's hungry and when he's so hungry that he melts down and begins swatting his food around like Godzilla taking down Tokyo.

No longer able to hold myself—or anyone else—to imaginary ideals of perfect parenting, my outrage morphed into curiosity. How and why did my parents decide to say grace every night? I decided to ask.

Dad couldn't remember making a decision. "It just sort of happened," he said. At first Mom agreed, saying that it had happened "in true Sweeney fashion, without any real conversation that I can remember." She thought for a moment and then smiled.

She asked me if I remembered anything about preschool. I nodded. I could picture it a little. Mostly, though, I remembered the time I got in trouble for singing, rather loudly, a song of questionable taste that I'd heard on the radio.

Mom reminded me—if I'd ever known—that it was an evangelical Christian preschool, chosen for long-lost reasons, more likely related to drop-off time than theology. Not surprisingly, we said grace at evangelical preschool.

"And," Mom continued, "you came home one day and asked why we didn't say grace at home. You thought that we should. So we did."



As children, we simply assume that our parents know what they're doing. As parents, we are often acutely aware that we haven't done this before, that we're learning on the job, that our children—the most precious gifts we've been given—are the guinea pigs in our parenting experiment.



This is sometimes a scary thing, especially when we encounter new challenges. How do I respond when my child starts hitting? Talking back? Hiding things? Taking big risks?

Many Parents, One Vine is a community of parents committed to building each other up, learning together, praying for each other, and looking to scripture to be reminded that God is with us every step of the way—especially when we feel uncertain and underprepared.

You are invited to join this group of 40 to 50 parents on **Sunday mornings from 10:10 until 11:00** in Room 14 for study, prayer and small group discussion. There is no need to register, and visitors and drop-ins are always welcome.

Please check the Web site (ststephensRVA.org/parents) for updates about session topics and optional reading. Here are two of the series we'll be offering this fall:

Parenting as Exodus—Like Moses, we sometimes feel ill-equipped to be in charge: "Who am I that I should bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Like Moses, our love and sacrifice are often rewarded with complaint, disobedience, and occasional mutiny. And just as Moses did not reach the Promised Land with the people he led, nor will we see the final fruits of our labor. In this series we'll look at the book of Exodus and how its spiritual wisdom might guide us as we lead God's children on the journey of childhood and adolescence.

The One Necessary Thing—Jesus says to his friend, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing." What is the one necessary thing and how can we, as parents, remain focused on it amid the many distractions of life? In this series, we'll explore the biblical case for mindfulness; and we'll learn practices, both Christian and secular, to help free parents and children of the worries and distractions that separate us from each other and from the love of God. ❀

Do you have one of these?

The United Thank Offering, a ministry of the Episcopal Church founded over a century ago, is a ministry of prayer, and more specifically, one of gratitude. Episcopalians mindful of their blessings use the prompt of a small cardboard box to express appreciation by dropping coins or dollars into the box as they say prayers of thanks. When those prayers, and the offerings that represent them, are combined, they result in grants that address human need in our own community and throughout the world.

Twice each year—once in the spring, once in the fall—we bring these offerings to St. Stephen's. The fall 2007 "ingathering" will take place **Sunday, October 1**.

If you do not already have a "Blue Box" in your home or office, pick one up (they are free) outside Palmer Hall. Bring your filled box to church October 1, then start with a new box for the spring ingathering. ❀



New prayer ministry to begin at St. Stephen's

Parish chapter of Daughters of the King is in formation

By Sarah Bartenstein

St. Stephen's Church offers a variety of ways for people to support one another in prayer, from our healing prayer ministry to a weekly contemplative prayer group to daily Morning and Evening Prayer to spiritual retreats here and elsewhere. Soon, women of this parish will have another way to exercise a ministry of prayer.

The Order of the Daughters of the King invites women and girls to engage in a ministry of intercessory prayer, conducted in community under a "Rule of Life" (as other religious orders do, including the Society of St. John the Evangelist). Daughters of the King define themselves as an order, not an organization. Community is found primarily in local chapters, but it extends around the world. One such chapter is forming at St. Stephen's.

Daughters of the King are women and girls who seek to deepen their relationship with God. Members—both lay and ordained, at different stages on their spiritual journeys—are strengthened through the discipline of a Rule of Life and supported through one another's companionship.

This is not an organization with frequent meetings or programs. The community is dispersed—young women in school or at home with children, women focused on professional pursuits or community engagement, retired women, homebound women—and are united by their Rule of Life and by prayer.

Just as those serving as healing prayer ministers or lay eucharistic visitors do, aspiring members of the Daughters of the King will engage in a period of discernment. This discernment period will begin in the fall, with the goal of initiating the chapter in January, during Epiphany. Members will gather as a group three times per year, but their ministry will take place wherever they are.

The benefits do not accrue only to those called to this ministry, of course. Knowing that we are being prayed for with such intentionality is a great blessing.

And since members of this order keep all prayer requests in strict confidence, those desiring prayers but reluctant to be included on a published prayer list will find this offering a great comfort.

The formation of this new parish chapter is being coordinated by the Rev. Claudia W. Merritt, priest associate, and parishioner Sherlyn Dibble. Claudia and Sherlyn hope eventually to expand the chapter to include girls as young as seven, as the national Order of Daughters of the King encourage.

"When Ken and I were attending Emmanuel Episcopal Church in Southern Pines," says Sherlyn, "I heard a parishioner ask how to get a prayer request to 'the Daughters.' I began to inquire about the Daughters of the King and explored their Web site."

Sherlyn continues, "I was drawn to the ministry of intercessory prayer and the discipline of a Rule of Life. Being a part of a communion of women, engaged in serving others through prayer, is for me a calling of my heart."

She mentioned the idea to Claudia, who had experienced Daughters of the King in other parishes, and when they approached Gary Jones about establishing this ministry at St. Stephen's, he was enthusiastic.

Claudia and Sherlyn note that, while members of the chapter will pay annual dues (as required by the national Order of the Daughters of the King), money should not be a barrier to participation by any woman who wishes to take part in the discernment process.

A meeting to introduce this opportunity will be held **Monday, September 18, at 7 p.m.** To learn more and to explore whether you might be called to this ministry, please contact Claudia (804.288.2867, cmerritt@ststephensRVA.org) or Sherlyn (804.928.2278 or sydibble@gmail.com). ❀

Three beloved services

Fall is the time for three cherished services at St. Stephen's Church: the Blessing of the Animals, the All Saints' Day service, and the Thanksgiving Day service.

Blessing of the Animals | Sunday, October 8 | 3 p.m.

For many years, St. Stephen's Church has held a Blessing of the Animals service near the Feast of St. Francis (October 4), who is often associated with the care of animals. A few years ago, the service moved to Saturday to include those who brought their dogs to the farmers market. While many market patrons did bring their dogs for a blessing, we no longer saw cats, gerbils, rabbits, goldfish or other pets—and we missed many parishioners during this service as well.

So this year, we're going back to a Sunday afternoon service. Please bring your pets to church on Sunday, October 8, at 3 p.m. This brief service of prayers, hymns and blessing of individual pets will take place on the lawn (weather permitting) at the Three Chopt entrance to the church. If it rains, we'll go indoors.

All Saints' Day | Wednesday, November 1 | noon

All Saints' Day is a major feast of the church year. While we are accustomed to thinking of "saints" as people of extraordinary virtue leading Christ-like lives, people who end up in stained glass windows and on church calendars, the more ancient understanding of a saint is different. In the earliest days of the church, all baptized Christians were referred to as "saints." The word means "sanctified" or "set apart." Christians are people who have been consecrated or sanctified in baptism and called to live lives devoted to the Way of Jesus.

On All Saints' Day, we are put in mind of the "communion of saints," many of whom are people we knew and loved and who now worship with us "on another shore," in the familiar words of the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols we hear at Christmas. During our communion service at St. Stephen's, we are especially mindful of those who have died in the past year. Of course, all are welcome at this service, but if you have lost a loved one since last All Saints' Day, you are especially invited to attend. Parishioners who have died will be included in our intentions, but if you have a loved one who might not be on our parish list, please send an email to Betsy Lee in the parish office, blee@ststephensRVA.org.

Thanksgiving Day | Thursday, November 23 | 10:30 a.m.

St. Stephen's Thanksgiving Day service is known throughout the community. This service of Morning Prayer: Rite One includes a sermon, beautiful music with guest instrumentalists, and colorful harvest-themed decorations at the altar. The attendance rivals that of Christmas and Easter, so get here early to ensure you and yours can sit together. Just like on Sundays, you are invited to bring donations of shelf-stable food for our food pantry to this service. ❀



Blessing of the Animals service



High altar adorned for the Thanksgiving Day service

Briget Ganske

Sarah Bartenstein

The ministry of welcome

Welcome is one of the hallmarks of St. Stephen's Church. Visitors and longtime parishioners alike universally remark on the warmth with which they are greeted and tended. A smile and a friendly word to people as they arrive at St. Stephen's makes a difference. No matter what someone is carrying as he or she enters our doors, people know they have found a safe and loving place. Our welcome of all who come here is a sign of Christ's love as he welcomed all with whom he came in contact.

Our greeter ministry is an expression of welcome. It is the first thing people encounter, and it echoes the welcome of the altar. To increase that sense of welcoming presence, we are seeking additional people who feel called to this ministry. Greeters have a presence both before and after our Sunday services. In addition, greeters serve during funerals and special events.

If you are interested in learning more about this ministry of welcome, please contact Claudia Merritt at cmerritt@ststephensRVA.org. ❀



By Claudia W. Merritt



Sarah Bartenstein

Changes planned for December 24 services

This year, the Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve occur on the same date! The morning service timetable will adjust to accommodate the very full schedule of Christmas Eve services.

In addition, our traditional "children's" Christmas Eve service (4 p.m.) has become so crowded, even with overflow seating in the Fellowship Hall and Palmer Hall, we've adjusted the afternoon and evening schedule to add one more service. The 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. services will replace the 4 p.m. service, and both will offer the same liturgy and hymn selections you're used to at the 4 p.m. service.

The December 24 schedule will be:
SUNDAY MORNING, ADVENT 4

- ONE morning service, at 10 a.m. in the main church

SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND EVENING, CHRISTMAS EVE

- 3:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two (choirs for this service and the 5 p.m. service will be announced soon)
- 5:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two
- 8:00 p.m., Celtic Christmas with Virginia Girls Choir and instrumentalists
- 11:00 p.m., Traditional Christ Mass (Holy Eucharist: Rite One) with St. Stephen's Choir and instrumentalists

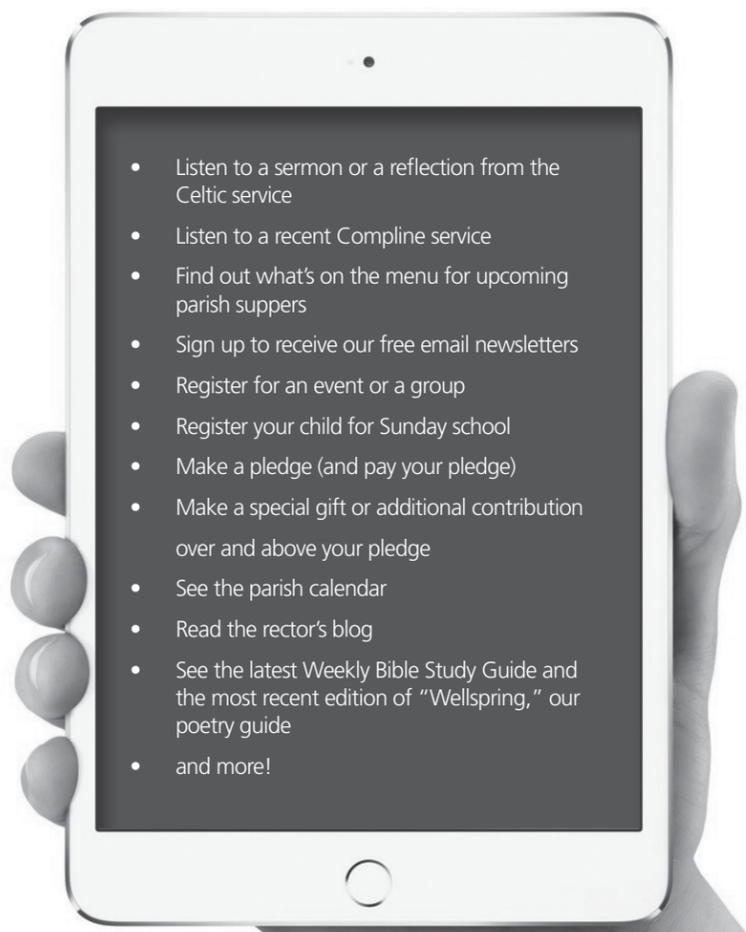
All Christmas Eve services take place in the main church, with overflow seating available in Palmer Hall and the Fellowship Hall. A half-hour of special music precedes each service.

The Saturday service that week (December 23) remains unchanged, with Holy Eucharist: Rite Two at 5:30 p.m. in Palmer Hall Chapel.

The Christmas Day service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, December 25, as usual.

The first Sunday of Christmas (Christmas I) will fall on December 31, also New Year's Eve. Our services that day will follow the usual Sunday schedule, though the 11:15 a.m. service will be Lessons and Carols. ❀

Stuff you can do at ststephensRVA.org



- Listen to a sermon or a reflection from the Celtic service
- Listen to a recent Compline service
- Find out what's on the menu for upcoming parish suppers
- Sign up to receive our free email newsletters
- Register for an event or a group
- Register your child for Sunday school
- Make a pledge (and pay your pledge)
- Make a special gift or additional contribution over and above your pledge
- See the parish calendar
- Read the rector's blog
- See the latest Weekly Bible Study Guide and the most recent edition of "Wellspring," our poetry guide
- and more!

Holiday Memorial Service returns in late November

Several years ago, St. Stephen's began offering a community-wide service in early December especially for those who have suffered a uniquely tragic loss: the death of a child. What our culture has come to think of as the "holiday season"—generally beginning with Thanksgiving Day and moving through Advent and Christmas, Hanukkah, and New Year's Day—is a particularly poignant time for people in such circumstances. The family-oriented and nostalgia-laden character of these weeks provides painful reminders that life will never be the same again. Even those for whom this loss feels somewhat less intense because of the passage of time, "the holidays" can still uncover the ache.



By Sarah Bartenstein

Last year, for a number of reasons, we did not hold the Holiday Memorial Service—and we heard from many people who missed it. This year, the service will return, and is scheduled in late November instead of early December, to avoid conflicting with other community offerings for those dealing with grief and loss.

If you have experienced the loss of a child, or know someone who has, please note this date and share the information as appropriate: **Monday, November 27, at 7 p.m.** The service is held here at St. Stephen's, and has the same gentle, contemplative quality that characterizes our Sunday evening Celtic service. It is, however, an interfaith service, and is meant to serve the entire community. It is for anyone who has lost a child of any age through any circumstance. Past services have been attended by parents, grandparents, siblings and others who have lost infants, children, teenagers or adult children through illness, accident, addiction, suicide or violence.

People who have attended this service in the past, regardless of their personal circumstances, have found it to be one of the most deeply moving experiences of the holiday season.

A simple reception will follow the Holiday Memorial Service, and childcare for ages 4 and under will be available.

If you have questions, please call (804.288.2867) or email the Rev. Stephen McGehee (smcgehee@ststephensRVA.org) or the Rev. Penny Nash (pnash@ststephensRVA.org). ❀

**Holiday Memorial Service:
Monday, November 27, at 7 p.m.**

Seasons of the Spirit

Season after Pentecost/Fall 2017

Issue Number 25

Parish Staff

To reach a staff member, call 804.288.2867. To send an email to a member of the staff, use the initial and name provided in parentheses, with @ststephensRVA.org. (If no email is listed, it means that the staff member does not have a St. Stephen's email address.)

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Vestry

Term expires 2018

John Barr
JB Burtch, *Senior Warden*
Mac Purrington
Taylor Raquet
Laurie Rogers, *Junior Warden*
Beth Smith, *Assistant Treasurer*

Term Expires 2019

John Bates, *Treasurer*
Judy Buchanan
Marie Carter
Calle Luke
Mac McElroy
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Term expires 2020

Melinda Hardy
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St. Stephen's Church: there's an app for that

St. Stephen's Church has an app.

When we launched a new Web site over a year ago, we made sure to use “responsive design,” so that the site would adjust to your device, whether you were using ststephensRVA.org on a desktop, a laptop, a tablet, or a phone.

So while our site is mobile-friendly, we know that some people like the convenience of an app that “lives” on your mobile phone's screen. From the app, you can check our calendar, read the latest news page, listen to a sermon, make (or pay) a pledge, and more.

To download St. Stephen's free app to your mobile device, go to the App Store (for iPhone) or Google Play (for Android) and, using the search function, type in “St. Stephen's Episcopal Church.” Our app will come up in the choices. If you have any trouble, call the parish office at 804.288.2867. ❀



Coming in April: Carrie Newcomer

Carrie Newcomer—a songwriter, recording artist, performer and educator—will give a concert at St. Stephen's on **Friday, April 6, 2018, at 7 p.m.**

Newcomer—a “soaring songstress” (Billboard) with “a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate” (Austin Statesman)—has toured with Alison Krauss in Europe and the United States. Nickel Creek recorded Newcomer's song “I Should've Known Better” on their Grammy-winning album “This Side.” She was listed as one of the “50 most influential folk musicians of the past 50 years” by Chicago's WFMT, and Boston's WBEZ listed her as one of the most influential folk artists of the last 25 years.



Of her songwriting, Rolling Stone said she “asks all the right questions.” The Dallas Morning News said, “She's the kind of artist whose music makes you stop, think and then say, ‘that is so true.’”

Newcomer, a contemplative Quaker, cuts across secular and spiritual boundaries. Recent appearances on PBS' “Religion & Ethics Newsweekly” (the same series that did a segment on our Celtic and Compline services) and Krista Tippett's radio program, “On Being,” have focused on her use of the creative arts as a spiritual-mindfulness practice, her work in social and environmental justice, interfaith dialogue, and progressive spirituality, and her advocacy for a new political conversation.

Her concert here will be a fundraiser for our international outreach ministries, including support for our long-standing relationship with the Diocese of the Dominican Republic, and our missionaries in Argentina, Heidi Schmidt and Monica Vega. In fact, Newcomer is one of Heidi's favorite singers and poets, and our two missionaries, who live and work among “the least of these,” will be here for this concert which will benefit some of the world's poorest people.

More details about tickets and sponsorship opportunities will be available soon. ❀

seasons of the SPIRIT

It's time! I need you NOW!

When Cherry called me to say that she was suddenly in labor with our first child and needed me to come home NOW, she had to give a message to a member of the altar guild, because I was lining up a wedding procession at the cathedral where I worked. My heart started racing; this was the moment I had been waiting for!

But of course, the bride and groom were in a different world – this was the moment THEY had been waiting for, too, and they had no idea what was on the little sheet of paper that the lady from the altar guild had handed me. I knew what I had to do, though. I gave the organist the high sign several minutes early, circling my finger in the air to signal, “Let’s get a move on!” and I proceeded to perform the fastest wedding of my career, probably the fastest wedding in the history of the cathedral.

For Cherry, things were coming fast, too. So fast that she gave up on my being there for her and, between contractions, made her way with difficulty to our backyard neighbors’ house (their line was busy), and our friends there were happy to drive her to the hospital. That was the next message I got, as I got out of my vestments and skipped the wedding photographs: Cherry was on her way to the hospital. That made me mad. That was MY job! But I ran to my car and got there as soon as I could, finding Cherry already settled into a room with a nurse caring for her, something I should have been doing all this time.

Over 32 years of ordained ministry, this sort of thing has happened a lot. I have been late or missed certain things with Cherry and our children, owing to my role as a parish priest. I think this is one of the reasons the Roman Catholic Church doesn’t like to have their clergy married—the idea that you can be “father” of a congregation or of a family, but not both. Respectfully, I disagree. Sure, my wife and children wish I could have been present or on time for an event now and then, but they were not emotionally scarred by my tardiness or absence. They understood. And my congregations have always been unwaveringly supportive of my excusing myself, whenever possible, to be with my family. I think my roles as husband and father have made me a better parish priest, and vice versa.

Now, however, our children are grown; it’s just the two of us at home. And recently, Cherry had to have surgery on her shoulder. She is a fiercely independent person, but the first days after surgery, Cherry needed me to help with the most basic things. I needed to tie her shoes, put in her earrings (“Doesn’t that hurt?!” I cringed. “No,” she smiled), wash her hair over the sink, and help her get her contacts in. I even learned how to use one of those round styling brushes to fix her hair. The first attempt wasn’t very successful, but I understood the process better the second time and even took a photo to send the children. I’m not such a bad stylist, after all.

I’ve loved every minute of it. We’ve been married for over 36 years, but this is the first time I’ve had the privilege of serving Cherry in this way. The intimate particularity of it all, the day-to-dayness of it, the menial nature of some of it (like tying shoes), and the newness of other parts (like inserting earrings and hairstyling)...what must surely be dull routine for her is strangely moving for me. And then going on a walk around the neighborhood together somehow takes on a new aura.



By Gary D. Jones

The seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany invite me to slow down and pay attention in this way, to notice the sanctity of things that perhaps have become routine, to find holiness in hidden places (a stable, not a crowded inn, for example), and to ponder the possibility that the light and joy we seek has actually just been sleeping within us, waiting to be awakened by our renewed, loving attention to the people in our lives.

I remember the altar guild member discreetly handing me that slip of paper with the message from Cherry that I needed to get home NOW, as if it happened yesterday. I remember that lickity-split wedding, too, and the disappointment that it wasn’t fast enough. But things have been different this time around, with Cherry’s surgery. Over a period of several days, I was late to some meetings at church. I overlooked some emails, and I even missed some appointments entirely. And I wouldn’t change a thing.

In fact, as Cherry held still one morning, while I was silently slipping in an earring (and secretly admiring the styling job I did on her hair the night before), I thought, surely this is how God loves us, with this kind of silent, intimate particularity, in a quiet wordlessness, when we can hear the preciousness of each other’s breathing, and we can be singularly and affectionately focused on loving and being loved.

We say it every year, but I’m feeling it more personally this time, that the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, for Christians, are less about presents than they are about presence, which is the greatest gift we can give each other. This can be an unusually soulful time of year, especially if we make a point of stepping off the treadmill, setting aside the numbing alcohol now and then, and pondering what it all means: God enters the particularity of human life in Jesus, so that we can step into the particularity of loving and serving each other. ❀

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Naming the **darkness**, awaiting the light



Entering the uncertainty of Advent

My brother Jamie knew that his company was preparing to restructure, and that the result would be the laying off of 150 of the 750 employees at his location. The company had announced those numbers, but not what positions would be eliminated, nor when exactly all the details would be revealed. For more than a year, he and his colleagues waited. They went to work each day as if everything were normal, while their anxiety—individual and collective—grew more and more overwhelming.



By Michael Sweeney

My friend Keith has struggled with debilitating back pain for close to 20 years, about half of his life. He has endured multiple surgeries, scores of painkillers, and seasonal epidural steroid injections. On good days, it's all he can do to drive his grandmother to the grocery store and make dinner for her. On bad days, he can't get out of bed. The next attempt to give Keith some relief will be to install in his back a device which blocks the pain signals from the nerves to the brain. He'd like to believe that this, finally, will be the light at the end of the tunnel, but the tunnel has been so long and dark, it's hard to find that hope.

"This is how the magi found Christ—they followed the star, a star whose light they could see precisely because of the darkness surrounding it."

I spoke recently with a parent whose daughter had just been diagnosed with a fairly rare condition, which, though not usually life-threatening, can require significant dietary changes. For now, she can't have any dairy products. The doctor doesn't know when—or if—she'll be able to return to it. How do you explain to a five-year-old child that she can't have her favorite thing (chocolate milk) anymore when you yourself don't fully understand it? Do you share with her the hope that she might be able to drink chocolate milk again in a few months? Is a few months even a helpful or hopeful concept for a five-year-old?

We all know this feeling: waiting for the light in a time of darkness. How hard it is to keep hope kindled when we don't know how long it will be. Like the psalmist, our hearts cry out, "How long, O Lord?"

The message of Advent speaks directly to us in our waiting, in our longing. We hear again the promise of the prophet: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2) Though we walk in darkness, we have seen a great light, and so we move towards it, one step at a time. This is how the magi found Christ—they followed the star, a star whose light they could see precisely because of the darkness surrounding it.

We tend, unfortunately, to strip Advent of its power and promise by the way we observe it. We make of it a countdown. With calendars and candles we count the days to Christmas. Yes, it is a time of waiting, but without any of the uncertainty that makes actual waiting so difficult. We know that Christmas will come on December 25, and if our observance of Advent is tied solely to that date, we miss the significance of this season for our real lives. It's easy to believe that Christmas will happen again this year. At the same time, most of us have real doubts and anxieties about some darkness in our own life. When will the light of Christ shine there?

"Naming the darkness makes real the light of Christ in our lives, in the same way that the night sky made the star visible."

This is exactly how our spiritual ancestors experienced the original Advent. There was no date on the calendar for the first Christmas. Their reasons for despair were many. Their hope seemed—and still seems—unreasonable to the rational mind. So what can we learn from those ancestors? How can we walk with them towards the light?

One thing the prophets did relentlessly was to name the darkness. Not to dwell on it, or in it, but to acknowledge what it is we are waiting for. Naming the darkness makes real the light of Christ in our lives, in the same way that the night sky made the star visible. Otherwise, it's easy to assume that we are waiting for something else: presents, a trip, a party, the Christmas pageant, the post-Christmas return of sanity.

What are you really waiting for? Where do you long to see the light shine in the darkness? In your own life? In the lives of friends and family? In Richmond and the wider world?

Consider adding this question to an existing practice. If you already have an Advent wreath, for example, you might name someone or something as you light the candles, saying, "May the light of Christ shine on Keith," or simply, "Keith."

Sometimes it's hard to name things out loud, so perhaps you make an invitation as you light the candle—to think of a place where the light of hope is needed, a person who is waiting for the birth of Christ. Find the language that speaks to you and your family.

The hope of the prophets, the promise of God's deliverance, is as real and as sorely needed as it was thousands of years ago. Let us not diminish that hope by making of it merely a countdown to December 25. The more fully we enter the uncertainty of Advent, the more powerfully the message of Christmas will speak to our own uncertainties: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it." ❀

Christmas Eve in a diner

One of my first food service jobs was waitressing at a 24-hour diner. I had spent many hours in my high school years drinking bottomless cups of coffee and writing or drawing in the same diner. I found a certain dark glamour in this overly-caffeinated, jukebox-beat-driven environment.

After high school, I worked there as a waitress during breaks from college, often during the graveyard shift, 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. During those hours, you see many different types of people from varied walks of life, all seeking the comfort of neon light in the darkness. You often find society's outcasts, as well—people working second or third-shift jobs, those who work in bars or clubs, people who are homeless or just need somewhere to get out of the weather.

My family has always had big, joyful Christmas Eve and Christmas Day celebrations. But several times during my 20s, I found it necessary to be absent from these events, in order to find myself in the season. One year, I volunteered to work the Christmas Eve graveyard shift at the diner. Some of the regulars, people who seemed to find their solace in the bottom of shot glasses, were there that night. New people came in, as well, folks just looking for somewhere to be. I wore a red and green elf hat, and the bartender had on a jingle bell necklace. I honestly don't remember many details of that Christmas Eve. We had customers. It wasn't very festive, but it was necessary, a place that met a need for many people. Working in a diner is not how I would want to spend my Christmas Eve, generally speaking, but I am glad to have had the experience. The fact is that there are many among us who seek small spots of solace on dark winter nights. On Christmas morning, I drove from the diner to the comfort of my childhood home, full of people who love me. Not everyone who left the diner that day was as lucky.

I don't think there is heroism or glory in providing light in the darkness, in building open and welcoming communities. It feels more like our duty as humans. Yet it's something we often forget to do in our hustle and bustle.

The "village green" hospitality embodied by our farmers market—now in its ninth year—and the just-opened café and so much else that St. Stephen's does is impor-



By Moriah Karn



tant because it calls us intentionally to create access to community. We must be the ones to provide light in the darkness.

With the Café @ St. Stephen's, we are cultivating a space where we can grow, feed, and build community in an open, welcoming space for diverse visitors. We have an amazing church staff of hospitable lay people and clergy whose regular presence will be a warm reminder that all are welcome and loved. This will be a place to be with people, without dictating what the level of interaction must be.

The huge amount of work that went into the design of our café took into account various levels of activity and engagement that different customers want. It can be a place for quiet reflection, without having to be truly alone. It can be a place where interactions begin. It can also be a meeting place for friends old and new.

Every little bit of goodness we put into the world makes a difference. I know that to be true. Our café is going to be a great source of goodness in the St. Stephen's community and beyond.

We will not, however, be open all night on Christmas Eve. ❀

Moriah Karn manages our new café, and is also the manager of the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's.

Anticipate, experience, share



By Penny A. Nash

Each liturgical season has a theme, a focus around which the readings, the hymns, and the sermons cluster. Most of us would agree that Advent is a season of anticipation. We hear with anticipation John the Baptist declare that a mysterious someone is coming; we wonder in anticipation with Mary at the appearance of the Angel Gabriel and what sort of news he has for her; we wait with Mary as she and we, together with all the world, anticipate the birth of the Christ Child. In anticipation of his arrival, we prepare room in our hearts for Christ to be born in us.

During Christmas, through story and song, we experience the beauty of the starlit night, of a sky filled with angel wings and celestial song. We experience the joy of the birth of a baby, even if it is a birth in a mucky stall and under murky circumstances. We feel the warmth of the cow's breath and the softness of the lamb's wool. We experience the wonder of the shepherds as their sleep is interrupted with cosmic news. We experience the gift to the weary world of the savior born to us in Bethlehem.

Then comes the Epiphany and the weeks after that. The world, which has in some way at least given a nod to Advent (preparation and anticipation are certainly in the air) and is happy to go all out for experiencing Christmas, doesn't quite know what to do with Epiphany. For the world, January is the season of cleaning out closets and going back to the gym to lose a few pounds and buckling down on those New Year's resolutions. But for us Christians, I would argue, the theme of Epiphany is sharing. God has given us the gift of salvation in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and on the day of the Epiphany,

the Magi come to worship the one who has been given to us and to present their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Through the readings we see more and more how God unveils—shares with us—the identity of Jesus, who shares our humanity and yet also shares God's divinity. That divinity is revealed to us, divinity that God wants to share with us as well.

But not only is Epiphany a time of God sharing with us but our sharing with the world the experiences we have had during Advent and especially Christmas. We are putting into action the joy of Christmas. We are sharing the story and the love, looking outward. During Epiphany we read of the story of the abundance at the wedding at Cana, of Jesus' baptism, of Jesus calling a community of disciples to walk with him, of Jesus proclaiming the Good News to those who are desperate, of Jesus healing people of the demons that have taken hold to strangle their lives. Epiphany is about making God manifest in the world, about the son of Mary known as the one who loves us without limit and calls us to follow. Epiphany calls us to share with the world our faith, our love, the Good News that we have seen for ourselves. Now it is up to us to make God manifest in the world around us.

Of course, it's always good to follow Jesus. It's always good to share. But how much more meaningful are these things when we do them in light of that season of anticipation and wonder and that season of experience and joy? We share with the world because we awaited the longed-for salvation and know that others still wait. We share with the world because we have experienced the joy of receiving the gift of unlimited love and know that others do not have joy. We share with the world because God has shared with us the gift of abundant life, so abundant that it overflows like wine at the wedding, more than anyone can even consume.

Love never ends, as St. Paul says. How shall we share it this year? ❀



The Nativity Window at St. Stephen's



Briget Ganske

Sarah Moyer-Thacker introduced lessons from Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at Vacation Bible School here last summer.

Speechless in wonder

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany through the lens of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

You know what a treasure St. Stephen's gothic church is—its soaring stone walls, its stained glass windows, its beautiful baptismal font. But do you know about St. Stephen's better-hidden treasure? Upstairs in the parish house are five wonderfully-appointed atria—sacred spaces where children and adults gather on Sunday mornings for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Even those of us who know and love these spaces don't always realize what a gift they are. We get used to them. Each summer, dozens of people travel to St. Stephen's from all over the state for our week-long catechist training course, and every year the reaction of our visitors reminds me how special the atria are. It's like seeing Peter, John, and James on the mount of the transfiguration. So if you've never visited the atria, I encourage you to do so. Now is a good time. Come during Advent to hear the familiar prophecies retold, and experience them afresh through a child's wonder. I hope this brief conversation with lead catechist Sarah Moyer-Thacker will whet your appetite. —*Michael Sweeney*

SARAH: In the atrium during Advent we listen to the prophecies that are connected to this time of waiting and expectation in our church year. A candle is lit and the children listen as a catechist reads from Isaiah, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2a) We invite the children to wonder about these words. What could they mean? What is the prophet telling us? How can these words that were spoken so many years ago speak to us now?

MICHAEL: Those are great questions. Questions that might rightly leave a person—child or adult—speechless in wonder. One of the things I love about Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is the philosophy (from its Montessori roots) that "silence is a valid response." There's no anxiety on the part of the catechist to get an answer, to have his or her work validated by the child's response; she knows that the fruit always belongs to God, and that much of it is not visible. Meanwhile, the anxious teacher asks more and more questions, leaving less and less silence in between, and resorts finally to either answering the questions himself or forcing a student to speak. As a teacher, I have felt

this anxiety. Had I been at the manger, would I have interrupted Mary's pondering, her treasuring of the shepherd's words, to ask if maybe THIS is what Isaiah was talking about in chapter 9, verse 2?

SARAH: In the atrium, the materials are one way we avoid this temptation to ask too many questions or give too many answers. The materials are physical objects that allow the children to continue to think about what they have heard, to let their hands "work" with it, while heart, mind, and soul do their work of pondering and treasuring. In Advent, for example, we have a small wooden figure with head tilted up and arms open to the world. This statue represents the prophet. It does not have any colors or features. It is just a simple visual representation of a stance or gesture. It could be seen as open listening or proclamation, depending on your interpretation.



MICHAEL: I love this. First, it makes sense that Catechesis of the Good Shepherd materials are simple, not overly detailed. This is another way of not saying too much, isn't it? Like the catechist, the materials are restrained, that Christ might speak through them. Second, I love that the prophet figure's posture is ambiguous. It reminds me that open listening and proclamation are inseparable—all right speech arises out of listening, whether to the Holy Spirit or another human being. This is what the incarnation is all about: we begin with open listening (Advent), we hear something that transforms us (Christmas), and we proclaim the good news we have heard (Epiphany).

SARAH: What you've just described is very similar to what we tell the children about prophets. Catechists say that a prophet is "someone who listens to God with their whole heart and tells others what they hear." How beautiful is this idea? To listen to God with one's whole heart. Often when the children are remembering this definition they will raise their hands to the sky or place a hand over their heart. We wonder about the words of these prophets who loved God so much that they listened with their whole heart and then went even further and shared with others what they heard—shared the words that we are still listening to today, words that help us ponder the great mystery of the incarnation. ❀

TRAINING FOR CATECHISTS (and potential catechists)

As the conversation above shows, the approach of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is quite different from traditional Sunday school, and special training is offered for those who would like to serve in this ministry. At St. Stephen's Church, we offer training every summer for catechists from this parish and other churches of any denomination, led by Anna Hurdle, one of the foremost Catechesis trainers in the country. This training is worthwhile even if you are not certain that you want to serve as a catechist.

Dates for training in 2018 are:

Level I: July 30-August 4, 2018

Level II: August 6-11, 2018

Online registration will be available in 2018. Tuition is waived for St. Stephen's parishioners. More at ststephensRVA.org/catechesis

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (kat-eh-KEE-siss)

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is a unique approach to the spiritual nurture of young children. Based on the work of Sofia Cavalleti and Maria Montessori, this offering recognizes that children are already in touch with God in their deepest being.

Catechist (KAT-eh-kist)

A guide; not a "teacher" in the traditional sense, but an adult who wonders with the child

Atrium

The specially-prepared sacred space in which Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes place

Questions on the sidewalks of New York

Last summer, a group of rising 9th graders went to New York City for a few days of immersion in the big city. While it can seem glamorous in some ways, the city can be a tough place. We saw people sleeping on sidewalks, digging in the trash, a woman begging for food while tears rolled down her face, and countless others. For many in our group, it provided harsh exposure to how many people live.



By Sarah-Keel Crews

Soon after arriving, we fell into our walking routine, which included walking in pairs. While navigating the streets, I walked with a boy who had never been to New York, and he had a lot of questions.

On the first day, a few minutes after passing a homeless man, the boy turned to me and said, “Do you think they count homeless people as people?” It took me a minute to even register what he was saying. I realized what he really meant was did New York consider the homeless to be part of the population count. It wasn’t what he’d said, though, it was the way he’d said it. Counting people as people? Struck by his question, and not really knowing how to respond, I told him I wasn’t sure.

Later that night, we were walking again, and he craned his neck to look up at the sky. “Do you think New Yorkers know what stars are?” Again, struck by his question and not knowing what to say, I responded with, “I’m honestly not sure.” We mused together that if a child grows up in that big city they might not see them. A place with so much light pollution can block out even the brightest stars.

The last poignant question of our trip was at the 9/11 museum. We had group conversations about the tragedy it commemorates, but I wasn’t sure how much of it had actually resonated. As we waited for some in the group to finish their tour, my walking companion asked if I wanted to go to the gift shop with him. As we walked together, he asked me, “Do you think they’ll rebuild the World Trade Center?” That was a complicated question. While I knew there were plans for construction on other parts of the complex, two memorial fountains are directly on top of the foundations of the fallen towers already. Of



Gene LeCouteur

St. Stephen’s youth walked – and walked – through New York City last summer.

course, rebuilding doesn’t necessarily mean putting up structures. There was a deeper aspect to the question. Once again, I told him I wasn’t sure.

Now in the gift shop, I watched him browse for something to purchase. I could tell he wanted something important to represent his experience, but didn’t know what to get. He got into the checkout line, and a few minutes later walked up to me and proudly displayed his wrist. He had decided on a rubber bracelet (“United by Hope”), and explained to me that if you made a donation, as he had, you got a second one. I smiled and agreed that it was a great purchase. Rubber bracelets may seem like a trivial teenage fad, but I have seen them on his wrists every week at youth group. Even now, months later, they’re still there, a tangible reminder of his experience.



And for me, months later, I’m still struck by his questions. Maybe one of these days I’ll do some research into those questions he asked me, or he’ll find the answers himself. Regardless, I can’t stop thinking about how lucky I am to work in a place where people are people. A place where God has given me my own stars to illuminate the things in my life I can’t always see. A place that continually builds on a strong foundation of love, faith, and community. ❖

Two summer mission trips offered for youth

St. Stephen’s youth have two opportunities to participate in mission trips this summer. The deadlines for signing up are coming soon, so don’t delay. Go to ststephensRVA.org/youthmissiontrips.

For students currently in grades 10-12: Dominican Republic
July 17-24, 2018
Application deadline: January 15, 2018

We’re thrilled to be able to offer this wonderful trip again after a one-year hiatus. St. Stephen’s relationship with the Episcopal Church in the Dominican Republic goes back many years. This will be the sixth team of youth missionaries that we send to the city of Azua to help lead Vacation Bible School with the parishioners of our two partner churches there: San Jorge and Iglesia de la Reconciliación. We will read and act out Bible stories, sing and pray with the children, help with arts and crafts activities, and play lots of games. While the mornings are spent in VBS, the afternoons are spent in worship, fellowship, and games with parishioners—particularly the youth—of our partner churches. In past years, we’ve made afternoon field trips to the beach and the river. Knowledge of the Spanish language is not required. Hallie Reichel, a participant in the 2012 and 2014 trips, observed, “Smiles, hugs, and games were the only language I needed. The people in Azua are extremely

welcoming and joyful. The children just wanted to be next to me, hold my hand, or put their arm around me; their love and acceptance brought so much happiness to each day.” Visit the web site to watch a video about the 2014 trip, and to see the application that includes information about costs, expectations, fundraising, and more.

For students currently in grades 8 and 9: Beckley, West Virginia
July 29 – August 3, 2018
Reservation deadline: December 4, 2017

Twelve youth and three adults from St. Stephen’s will work with other youth from around the country—through an organization called YouthWorks—to serve the residents of Beckley, West Virginia, in projects like home repair, painting, and yard beautification. The trip will also be an opportunity to learn more about Appalachian culture and work with partner organizations (Salvation Army, School of Harmony) in the area. The cost is \$400, which includes lodging, meals, tools, and evening activities led by YouthWorks. Financial assistance is available. The deadline for expressing interest is December 4. However, please know that the 12 spots may fill before then. ❖



Michael Sweney

The Café @ St. Stephen's is open

The latest expression of our 'Village Green' is a place to gather, interact, refresh

After more than a year of planning, several months of fundraising, and a summer and fall of demolition and construction, we have a café! On Wednesday, November 15, during a "soft opening," baristas brewed the first espresso drinks, whirred the first smoothies and warmed the first pastries of this exciting new "village green" offering. (In fact, one of those smoothies is named "The Village Green.")

A special event to thank all who made donations to make this new ministry a reality took place the next day.

The Café @ St. Stephen's is the latest expression of the way this parish seeks to be a 21st century version of the green or the commons or the town square. The café seeks to build community, connecting people to one another and our choices about the foods we consume to our call to be stewards of God's creation. The Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's, our Sunday Community Suppers, our visiting speakers and poets, and other ministries at St. Stephen's Church all contribute to this mission, extending a welcome to all, whether members of St. Stephen's, members of another faith community, or not affiliated at all. This is a reclaiming of the role the church has played through the centuries, with "parishes" actually being geographic areas for which the local church had a sense of responsibility.

The café is open seven days a week with a combination of paid staff and volunteers on hand to make coffee, tea, and espresso drinks, serve food, and welcome visitors. Initial opening hours may be adjusted over time, but at this point, the café is open Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Initial offerings in the café include bagels to order, pastries from Red Cap Patisserie, oatmeal, the full range of espresso drinks, innovative health drinks



such as golden milk lattes, elderberry spritzers, and even charcoal lattes. We'll offer wraps from Ellwood Thompson's, daily soups, homemade pumpkin bread, and a plethora of salty and sweet snacks for people of all ages.

The relationship between the café and the farmers market is a close one, in a number of ways. Moriah Karn, initially hired to manage the café, is managing the market as well, now that Gene LeCouteur has left St. Stephen's to serve at Emmanuel, Middleburg. Fortunately for us, she not only has entrepreneurial, construction, and food service experience, she also has farmers market experience. Vendors like Red Cap who have participated in the market are providing food for us to sell in the café, as well. And the café is open during market hours so that people who like to enjoy a hot beverage while they shop will have more choices than ever.

The importance of providing a space for conversation, reading, or relaxing is central to the café's mission. At least one member of the family ministries staff—Michael Sweeney, Sarah-Keel Crews, or Allison Seay—will be on hand during the hours when youth are not in school, to offer the opportunity for interaction in a low-key atmosphere.

We are thrilled about the staff hired to work in the café. All bring a deep understanding of and belief in the café's purposes. Three of the five baristas are themselves entrepreneurs who are pursuing their passions—farming, landscaping, dance—during the hours they are not at the café. All have food service, café or grocery store experience. Volunteers are integral to the café's operations. If you are at least 14 years of age and are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please contact Moriah at mkarn@ststephensRVA.org. ❀

The café seeks to build community, connecting people to one another and our choices about the foods we consume to our call to be stewards of God's creation.



(Left to right) Twyla serves Gary Jones during the café's 'soft opening,' November 15. There is a refrigerator case with yogurt, sandwiches, bottled juices and more; fresh baked goods are also available. The first customers were those who had come from Morning Prayer and Communion.

THE CAFE @ ST. STEPHEN'S		
COFFEE & ESPRESSO	SMOOTHIES 16OZ	TEA & MORE
drip coffee \$2.00 / \$2.50 / \$3.00	tropical topic \$6.00	loose leaf hot tea \$2.50
iced coffee \$2.50 / \$3.00 / \$3.50	mango, pineapple, strawberry, coconut, almond milk	iced tea \$2.00 / \$2.50 / \$3.00
espresso 1shot \$2.25 2shots \$2.75	the village green \$6.00	hot chocolate \$2.00 / \$2.50 / \$3.00
latte \$3.29 / \$3.59 / \$3.99	spinach, pineapple, almond butter, almond milk, banana, ginger	chai tea latte \$3.00 / \$3.50 / \$4.00
cappuccino \$3.29 / \$3.59 / \$3.99	berry glad to see you \$6.00	europaean steamer \$2.00 / \$2.50 / \$3.00
americano \$2.00 / \$2.50 / \$3.00	blueberry, blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, almond milk	golden milk steamer \$3.50 / \$4.00 / \$4.50
cafe au lait \$2.50 / \$3.00 / \$3.50	all shook up \$6.00	matcha milk steamer \$3.50 / \$4.00 / \$4.50
bulletproof coffee \$4.00	banana, peanut butter, cacao powder, chocolate syrup, almond milk	berry good ACV invigorator \$3.00
charcoal latte \$3.50 / \$4.00 / \$4.50	good to go \$6.00	sparkling elderberry refresher \$3.00
<small>+ADDONS: \$0.99 organic vanilla, lavender, pumpkin spice, organic hazelnut, blackberry, strawberry, dark chocolate, organic caramel</small>	<small>+ADDONS: \$0.99 organic yogurt, non-dairy yogurt, flax seed, chia seeds, non-dairy protein powder, protein powder, acai berry powder</small>	<small>FEATURING FAIR TRADE/DIRECT TRADE ORGANIC COFFEES FROM ROSTOV'S Coffee & Tea</small>



Students took a study break in the café on opening day. The drink menu as it will appear on a chalkboard in the café.

Sarah Bartenstein photos

'I love green peas!'

New 'grocery store' model is a hit with food pantry clients and volunteers

After much planning, work, and anticipation, the new client choice model for our food pantry opened on Monday, October 2. This approach, sometimes called a "grocery store," allows pantry clients to make their own selections rather than being handed pre-packed bags of groceries containing foods which might or might not be suitable for their families. For example, a family member might have a food allergy or medical condition that prohibits their consuming certain foods. The client choice model not only reduces waste, it offers a measure of dignity to the person in need, provides the ability for them to make their own decisions, and allows us to serve them more effectively and efficiently.



By Deb Lawrence

The new "grocery store" is open every Monday, 1-3 p.m. in the Somerset Room (the former vestry room) in the parish house. The new set-up has been well-received by the clients, who are appreciative of the ability to choose what they need within established food categories.

After being here the first day, a client called to express her appreciation, exclaiming, "I love it! And I got green peas! I love green peas!"

Another client visited recently and selected groceries while his wife and children waited for him in the car. The man had just gotten a job after a period of unemployment and he and his family needed a bit of help while they got back on their feet financially. When he saw the "extras" shelves, where we offer miscellaneous items, he was thrilled that a specific type of baby formula was available, one that his child needed because of a food allergy but which they could not afford. He even offered to return some of the other food he had selected so that he could have this baby formula, but of course we were happy to be able to provide it to someone who needed it. This likely would not have happened using the old model; the father



Sarah Bartenstein

Staff member Jessica Smith introduces volunteers to the new arrangement.

would have had no idea that we had this formula, and we could not have known his baby needed it.

Our food pantry volunteers are very excited about the changes, as well, because this new approach allows more interaction with the clients; they enjoy building relationships. As each client moves through the grocery store, she or he is accompanied by a pantry volunteer who assists with inventory quantities, descriptions, and selections.

St. Stephen's is the only food pantry in the area that allows clients to visit every week. For this reason, we sometimes have visitors from as far away as Petersburg. However, we have many clients who live in neighborhoods adjacent to St. Stephen's. We also receive those referred to us by FeedMore, the Richmond area food bank, with whom we are an official partner agency. The majority of these referrals are people under age 40, many from our own community. As this edition of **Seasons of the Spirit** was going into production, we had the largest turnout ever for a single day, 58 clients.

Thank you for your donations to our food pantry! We continue to rely on your generosity for staples (and paper grocery bags with handles), and our wonderful farmers market vendors for fresh food. We also receive unsold packaged items from Libbie Market and from the snack bar at the University of Richmond. Please feel free to stop by the "store" to see what needs replenishing before your next grocery shopping trip. If you are interested in volunteering with the pantry, please contact Jessica Smith in the church office, jsmith@ststephensRVA.org or 804.288.2867. ❀

Farmers market heads indoors for the winter

Hot drinks available in the new café



Sarah Bartenstein

Even in winter, shoppers at the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's can find fresh produce, farm eggs, and pastured beef, poultry and pork.

Every year when the Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's heads indoors, we find out that some of its most loyal patrons do not realize they can continue to shop their favorite market year-round. At St. Stephen's, healthy eating and supporting local farmers and other businesses are not limited to the warmer months. We are proud and grateful to be able to offer fresh, local food to customers, and to support vendors who have products to sell year-round.

This year, there's a bonus: with the Café @ St. Stephen's open just down the hall from the market's winter location in the Fellowship Hall, market patrons can enjoy a latte or other hot drink on their way in or out, or fuel up with a healthy smoothie.

Beginning the Saturday after Thanksgiving, the market moves indoors and the vendor line-up shifts somewhat. Market hours at this time of year are 9 a.m. until noon, and we expect to have seasonal produce all winter. A caveat: if you want fresh produce, get to the market early—it sells out very quickly—or see if your favorite vendor has a CSA. In addition to produce, you'll find eggs, meats, baked goods, and prepared foods.

Do you receive the Farmers Market newsletter? Go to ststephensRVA.org/email to sign up for this free weekly email so you'll be sure to know when your favorite vendors will be at the market, and to learn about market surprises. Each issue also includes a recipe and a prayer to say at mealtime. We're also on Facebook and Instagram (StStephensRVAMarket).

What to look for indoors:

Fresh produce all winter: Agriberry Farm, Broadfork Farm, Byrd Farm, Crumptown Farm, and Urban Choice Mushroom Farm are all continuing through the winter. Plus, we're adding Elk Island Produce back in with hydroponic vegetables and herbs.

Chicken and eggs all winter: ShireFolk Farm is continuing through the winter, which means we'll have another supplier of pastured chicken and eggs to add to offerings from Byrd Farm. Black Boar Farm, Deer Run Farm, Faith Farm, and Harlow Ridge Farm will all have eggs as well.

New vendors and old friends: We're excited about Dark Brines, a new pickle vendor. Homemade Goodies By Sylvette returns with gluten-free and sugar-free cakes and sweet breads. Great Harvest Bread is joining us inside all season long. Sharp Again continues their bi-weekly knife sharpening routine year-round.

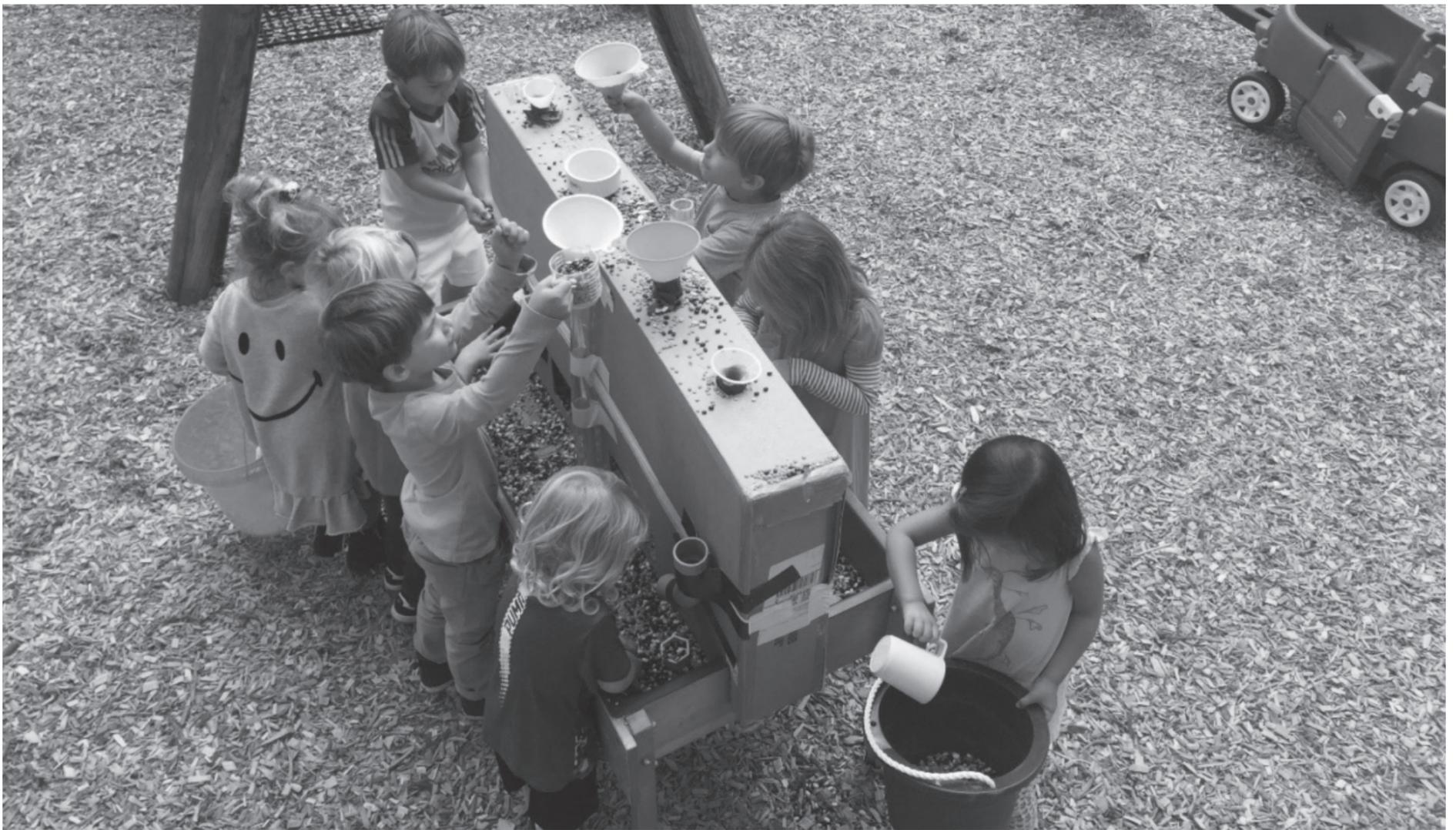
Prepared foods and the Café: Empanada.com and Red Cap Patisserie will be indoors over the winter, with ready-to-eat, warm hand pies. Truly Scrumptious, Curds and Whey RVA, and Unkol Chuck's Brunswick Stew will also have grab-and-go food. Plus, the new Café @ St. Stephen's is just down the hall with coffee and other goodies!

Pre-Christmas Bonanza: In addition to all of our great food vendors, we'll have Linda's Wreaths and Tuckahoe Plantation Flowers with natural holiday decor. Much and Stuff will have holiday cards, and six other craft vendors round out the market in December.

—Sarah Bartenstein and Kyle Dosier

On Saturday, December 23, there will be so much activity in the Fellowship Hall as we prepare for the Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve (which fall on the same day this year), we've moving the market back outdoors for one Saturday only. Come pick up food for your Christmas feast, as well as décor and gifts, and enjoy hot drinks outdoors. It will be a fun and festive market morning!

Market leadership: Moriah Karn is the new market manager, ably assisted by Kyle Dosier, who has been on the market staff for many years. Volunteers are needed every Saturday—contact Moriah at 804.288.2867 or email farmersmarket@ststephensRVA.org.



Ready, set, go

What does it mean to be ‘ready’ for kindergarten?

In a recent “Hi and Lois” cartoon, the family’s toddler, Trixie, thinks about the fact that she will soon go to kindergarten, then elementary school, then high school, then college. The last frame shows her basking in the sun, saying she’d better enjoy preschool while she can.

And so it is with preschool children, since their parents may already be thinking that if their children don’t hurry into elementary school—and the best one—their chances of getting into Harvard, Princeton, or Yale are surely going to be diminished.

Children need to go to kindergarten when they’re ready, but what is *ready*? The Commonwealth of Virginia says that children who turn five by September 30 are ready. However, many schools have kindergarteners from five years to six and a half years old in one class.

Is age a factor in a child’s success? In his 2008 book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell used a study of birthdates of hockey players to predict their success. He found that players in Canadian youth hockey leagues (comprised of children born in a single calendar year) who are born in January and February were more likely to make it to the big leagues than those born in the later months of the year. Because of their maturity, both physical and mental, the older players get more playing time, more practice, than the younger children.

In a study published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in January 2017, Thomas Dee, professor in Stanford’s graduate program in education, says he finds “strong evidence of mental health benefits in delaying kindergarten.”

“The study finds improved self-regulation in kindergartners who wait a year to enroll,” he writes. “Children who started kindergarten a year later showed significantly lower levels of inattention and hyperactivity.”

Dr. Arnold Gesell, known as “the father of child development,” whose work continues to inform current child development theory, wondered what our hurry was, and would often recommend giving the child with a later birthday the “gift of a year.”

So when considering readiness, we do need to consider age. For a child with a spring or summer birthday, what can be lost by giving him/her the “gift of time,” another year before kindergarten?

It’s often said that social and emotional maturity are the best predictors of a child’s success in school. Ask yourself if your child has difficulty separating from you. How well does she get along on a play date, negotiating with her friends? Observe your child’s impulse control. Would another year allow it to be more regulated? Your teacher can tell you how well your child is able to sit in a circle and attend. How well does he keep his hands to himself? Does he sit through dinner without getting up? Can he or she listen to a story attentively?



By Marion Chenault

Muscle control, both large and small, can be another indicator of maturity. Can your child physically sit up during circle time or a story? Is his/her core strong? Does he have a tripod pencil grip or use a fist? Can she cut a straight or curvy line with her thumb up? Does he shy away from doing fine motor activities?

Notice that in this article about readiness, academics are mentioned last. Generally they will come, just as children will lose their teeth, in due time, according to the child’s own developmental timetable.

What can parents do to help children be ready for kindergarten?

- The most important thing is to love them and let them know that you love them. This will give children the security they need to succeed.
- Loving does not mean doing everything for your child; it does not mean having no parameters.
- Let children do as much as possible for themselves, whether it’s unfastening their own seat belt (at the age they can understand when it’s OK to do so) or being responsible for their own belongings. Giving children the responsibility for doing things for themselves develops their minds. It also helps them feel competent. Children feel empowered when they think they are able. What message do parents send their children when they do everything for them? “You’re not able”?
- Read to them, making reading an entertainment, a way to discover information, and a special time to be together. READ, READ, READ!
- It’s important to give children little jobs at home. What better way to cement the concept that one equals one than by putting first one napkin, then a napkin and a fork, then a napkin, fork and knife at each place at the dinner table? Teachers call this one-to-one correspondence, a fundamental math concept, but parents might call it help, and be grateful for it.
- Following directions and understanding sequences are academic pursuits. Children can learn to follow first one direction, then two, then finally three or four. “George, please go upstairs and brush your teeth” (a two-step sequence). “Henry, please get your shoes and socks and bring them downstairs when you come” (three steps).
- Let your child help you cook. The sequence of a recipe and the sequence of a math problem are very similar. Helping makes children feel useful, and it’s fun!
- Get outside and PLAY, PLAY, PLAY.
- Stay inside and play games. Learning to strategize develops a flexible mind.

To know if children are ready for kindergarten, look at them as entire beings—physical, social, emotional, and intellectual.

The parents’ job is not to get their children ready for kindergarten. The task is to lead them on the path to building a healthy, full life. ❀

Marion Chenault has been director of St. Stephen’s Preschool, a ministry of St. Stephen’s Church, since January 2001, and previously served as director of Richmond Child Development Center’s Ellwood House, which she co-founded in 1982. St. Stephen’s Preschool is accredited by the National Accreditation Commission of Early Care and Education Programs and has been serving children ages one through six in the Richmond community since 1971. Our nationally accredited, play-centered program incorporates the very best ideas from Montessori, Piaget, and Reggio Emilia, and includes the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd. Learn more at ststephensRVA.org/preschool, including how to schedule a tour and apply for a spot for your child. The school is open to the entire community, not only to St. Stephen’s parishioners.

A season for sharing

When I was about 10 or 11 years old, I began to feel guilty that Christmas giving seemed sort of one-sided in our house. Though we were not well-to-do—my father was the vicar of a mission church, and my mother was a homemaker—our parents put aside enough money each month to make it possible for some special, wished-for things to appear under the Christmas tree for my younger brother, younger sister and me. My memories of childhood Christmases are happy ones. (Best: a dollhouse my parents built and furnished for me, with some neighbors getting in on the project. Worst: getting a bike I really, really wanted, but feeling terrible that I had seen it on my mother's list, thus spoiling the surprise. I didn't confess for decades.)



By Sarah Bartenstein

After years of enjoying the fruits of my parents' ability to pull a rabbit out of a hat, it dawned on me that we kids had not thought about what would be under the tree for Mom and Dad. I was particularly stricken that they did not have Christmas stockings. So I took the bus with friends to Miller and Rhoads department store and bought supplies to make red felt stockings, and a few small things to tuck inside.

I don't remember whether I sewed the stockings or glued them (I know that sequins were involved). I don't remember what I put inside, though it's a safe bet I gave my father a Mr. Goodbar. I don't remember where I got the money to buy these things.

What I do remember is my parents' surprise on Christmas morning, and how wonderful it felt to have created that surprise.

Now that I am an adult, I realize that, as much as they loved my gesture, they probably had not been feeling deprived. They probably didn't want much. At least, the older I get, the less I want. It becomes more and more difficult to compose a "wish list" for my family when they ask me what I'd like to receive for Christmas.

And yet we want to do something to let those we love know how much they mean to us, and many of us want to do that at Christmastime.

St. Stephen's Abundant Gifts catalog is a different kind of wish list. No dollhouses or bicycles. The wishes in this catalog are items that, frankly, most of us would take for granted, but they're things that our outreach partners need, and they need help to obtain them.

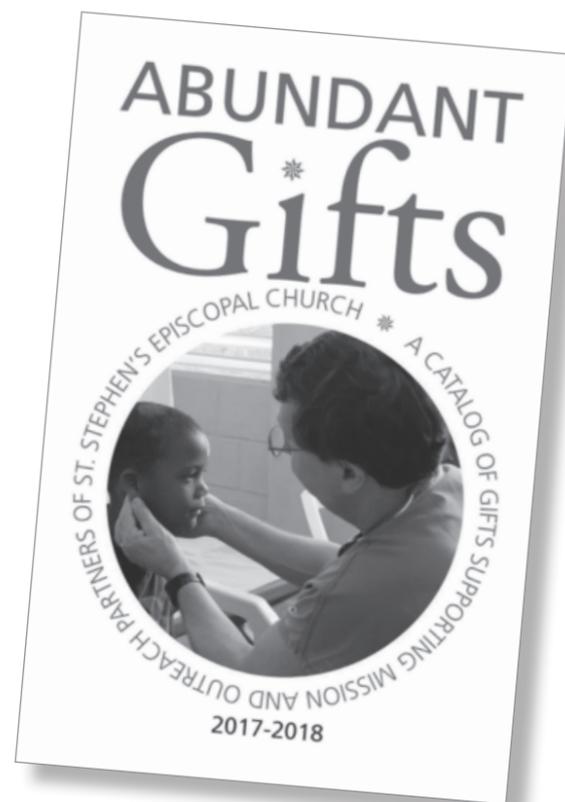
When you shop from the Abundant Gifts Catalog you could give school supplies to Anna Julia Cooper School in honor of a student in your family, or a beloved teacher who'd prefer not to receive another coffee mug. Is there a "foodie" in your family who doesn't really need another cookbook, apron, or gadget? Give the gift of food for our food ministry to benefit those whose pantries are bare. Your favorite woodworker (even if he can't build a dollhouse) would be honored by your sending building supplies in his or her honor to those recovering from natural disasters.

The Abundant Gifts Catalog offers a way for you to make a significant impact on the lives of real people who have fewer opportunities and material advantages while you avoid the practice of giving more material things to those who may not need or want them.

Copies of the latest catalog are available at Information Central. Please consider giving a gift on behalf of a friend or loved one to mark a birthday, anniversary or other milestone, or at Christmas. It will make a world of difference to those in need in our community and beyond.

The booklet includes a form to note your selections, make the payment, and indicate where St. Stephen's should send the acknowledgement to let your friend or family member know you honored them in this way.

Please contact Deb Lawrence, dllawrence@ststephensRVA, or Jessica Smith, jsmith@ststephensRVA, if you have questions. ❖



FALL 2017 AT ST. STEPHEN'S



It was a full and fruitful fall at St. Stephen's. (1) The Bluegrass Bash provided live music, food trucks, games and activities for children, and lots of fun for the community. (2) Heber Brown (pictured) and Fred Bahnsen talked about 'Food and the Beloved Community' at a community-wide event September 16. (3) The Blessing of the Animals service returned to the Three Chopt Road entrance to the church on Sunday, October 8, after a couple of years' sojourn in our farmers market. (4) Volunteers of all ages, including Claire, helped guests feel welcome and cared for during our CARITAS week in October. (5) John Philip Newell spoke on Thursday, October 19, about the spiritual and environmental legacy of John Muir; Newell also preached and spoke in the forum on Sunday, October 22. Photo 3 and 5 by Sarah Bartenstein; photo 4 by Stan Barnett; other photos by Briget Ganske

Advent, Christmas and Epiphany schedule highlights



Briget Ganske photos

Youth pageant

Read about Advent at St. Stephen's at ststephensRVA.org/advent.

Daily Morning Prayer and Evensong

Each weekday at St. Stephen's we offer Morning Prayer and Communion at 8:10 a.m., and a simple service of Evensong at 5:30 p.m. Both services are brief and take place in the main church. Evensong is led by the Virginia Girls Choir on Wednesdays. If the Daily Office is not already a part of your spiritual practice, Advent, Christmas or Epiphany may be an especially appropriate time to try it.

Saturday, December 2

9 a.m.-noon—Farmers Market in Fellowship Hall
9 a.m.-3 p.m.—Advent Retreat with Fr. Martin Laird
5:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

Sunday, December 3—Advent I

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
9 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, in the main church and Palmer Hall Chapel*
10:10 a.m.—Christian education for all ages; Fr. Martin Laird in the Sunday Forum*
11:15 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two*
5:30 p.m.—Celtic Service*
6:30 p.m.—Sunday Community Supper
8 p.m.—Compline



Children's pageant

Tuesday, December 5

11 a.m.—Women of St. Stephen's Holiday Music Program and Luncheon

Wednesday, December 6—Feast of St. Nicholas

5:30 p.m.—Evensong with Virginia Girls Choir
5:45-6:30 p.m.—Wonderful Wednesdays supper
6:30-8 p.m.—Advent Centering Prayer series with rector begins (*see page 11*)

Saturday, December 9

9-11 a.m.—Second Saturdays Centering Prayer
9 a.m.-noon—Farmers Market in Fellowship Hall
5:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

Sunday, December 10—Advent II

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
9 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, in main church and in Palmer Hall Chapel*
10:10 a.m.—Christian education for all ages*
11:15 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two*
5:30 p.m.—Celtic Service*
6-8 p.m.—Grades 4-8, Tacky Lights Tour (sign up in advance)
6:30 p.m.—Sunday Community Supper
8 p.m.—Compline

Wednesday, December 13

5:30 p.m.—Evensong with Virginia Girls Choir
5:45-6:30 p.m.—Wonderful Wednesdays supper (last one until January 10)

Friday, December 15

6-9 p.m.—Kids Night Out (Virginia Girls Choir holiday babysitting night; *see page 11*)

Saturday, December 16

9 a.m.-noon—Farmers Market in Large Fellowship Hall
3 p.m.—Children's Pageant (required rehearsal at 1 p.m.)
5:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

Sunday, December 17—Advent III

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
9 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, in Main church and Palmer Hall Chapel*
10:10 a.m.—Christian education through grade 5 (no offerings for youth or adults)
11:15 a.m.—Morning Prayer and Youth Christmas Pageant*



Christmas Eve

5:30 p.m.—Celtic Service*
6:30 p.m.—Sunday Community Supper
8 p.m.—Compline

Saturday, December 23

9 a.m.-noon—Farmers Market—**outdoors this Saturday only**
5:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

Sunday, December 24

Services for Advent IV

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
10 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, in main church*
Luminaria setup following 10 a.m. service (all ages)

Services for Christmas Eve

All services in the main church with overflow seating in Palmer Hall and Fellowship Hall
3 p.m.—Children's Service: Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, music begins at 2:30 p.m.*
5 p.m.—Children's Service: Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, music begins at 4:30 p.m.*
8 p.m.—Celtic Christmas; music begins at 6:30 p.m.*
11 p.m.—Traditional Christ Mass: Holy Eucharist, Rite One; music begins at 10:30 p.m.
*Child care available during services marked with asterisk

Monday, December 25—Christmas Day

Luminaria removal; volunteers needed
Parish office closed
10:30 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two in main church

Tuesday, December 26—Feast of St. Stephen

Parish office closed

Wednesday, December 27

Parish office reopens

Saturday, December 30

No Farmers Market

Sunday, December 31—Christmas I

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
9 a.m.—Lessons and Carols and Holy Communion in main church
No Sunday school or Forum; childcare available for ages 4 and under, 10 a.m.-noon*
11:15 a.m.—Lessons and Carols and Holy Communion in main church
5:30 p.m.—Celtic Service*
8 p.m.—Compline

Monday, January 1—The Holy Name

Parish office closed

Saturday, January 6—Feast of the Epiphany

9 a.m.-noon—Farmers Market in Fellowship Hall
5:30 p.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two

Sunday, January 7—The Baptism of Our Lord/Epiphany I

8 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite One
9 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two, in the main church and Palmer Hall Chapel*
10:10 a.m.—Christian education for all ages*
11:15 a.m.—Holy Eucharist, Rite Two*
5:30 p.m.—Celtic Service*
6:30 p.m.—Sunday Community Supper
8 p.m.—Compline

Monday, January 8

Winter Covenant Period for Emmaus Groups begins

Wednesday, January 10

Wednesday supper and other Wednesday activities resume

*indicates child care available, ages 4 and under



Luminaria on Christmas Eve



Briget Ganske

Hark! The December 24 service schedule is different

This year, the Fourth Sunday in Advent and Christmas Eve occur on the same date. The morning service timetable for Advent will adjust to accommodate the very full schedule of Christmas Eve services later that same day.

In addition, our traditional “children’s” Christmas Eve service held in the afternoon has become so popular, even with overflow seating in the Fellowship Hall and Palmer Hall, we’ve added another one just like it and adjusted the Christmas Eve schedule. You can attend a children’s service at 3 p.m. or 5 p.m.

December 24 services will be:

Sunday morning, Advent 4, two services in the main church

- 8:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist: Rite One
- 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist: Rite Two

Sunday afternoon and evening, Christmas Eve

- 3:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, with a special choir composed of children and youth (grades 2-12) who might not ordinarily sing in one of our choirs but who would enjoy singing on this occasion. The rehearsal will take place that day before the service, and members of the Virginia Girls Choir will help lead the singing.

- 5:00 p.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, with the Cherub Choir, the Palmer Hall Choir, and the Middle School Choir (same liturgy and hymns as 3 p.m. service)
- 8:00 p.m., Celtic Christmas with Virginia Girls Choir and instrumentalists
- 11:00 p.m., Traditional Christ Mass (Holy Eucharist: Rite One) with St. Stephen’s Choir and instrumentalists

All Christmas Eve services take place in the main church, with overflow seating available in Palmer Hall and the Fellowship Hall. A half-hour of special music precedes each service (so, 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m.).

The Saturday service that week (December 23, using readings for Advent IV) remains unchanged, Holy Eucharist: Rite Two at 5:30 p.m. in Palmer Hall Chapel.

The Christmas Day service will be held at 10:30 a.m. on Monday, December 25, as usual. Sanctuary, our Compline choir, will sing.

The first Sunday of Christmas (Christmas I) will fall on December 31, also New Year’s Eve. Our services that day will follow the usual Sunday schedule, though the 9 and 11:15 a.m. services will be Lessons and Carols. ❀

Advent offerings

Resources to enrich the season

On Saturday, December 2, Father Martin Laird will lead an Advent retreat from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. Prepare for the reflective season of Advent during this one-day retreat with this priest and professor known for his writing and teaching on the gifts of contemplation. The suggested donation is \$25 for the retreat, and \$7 for lunch.

Advent Centering Prayer: The rector will offer a Wednesday night series on the practice of Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina, **December 6, 13, 20, from 6:30 until 8:00 p.m.** Advent can be a race to the finish (December 24), or it can be a time for spiritual enrichment. Take 90 minutes once a week for three weeks to nurture your soul during Advent. Call 804-288-2867 to register.

Daily Advent meditations have become a much-appreciated and anticipated feature of the season at St. Stephen’s. Reflections on the Daily Office Lectionary (the Scripture passages assigned for each day of the week) or some spiritual insight or experience related to this season of preparation for the Incarnation arrive in each subscriber’s email every day of the season. The email subscription is free and is open to all, not just parishioners. If you are not already receiving them, you may sign up at ststephensRVA.org/advent.

The Society of St. John the Evangelist and Virginia Theological Seminary are collaborating on “Advent Word,” a daily, online, prayer-filled community that explores the sharing of contemplative offerings through an interactive Advent calendar. Visit <http://adventword.org>.

Do you remember the annual Advent poster illustrated by Episcopal cartoonist Jay Sidebotham and providing one prompt for each day of the season? You can download it as an app this year. Search iTunes (iPhone) or Google Play (Android) for “Forward Movement and Advent Calendar” to find and download the app.

Virginia Girls Choir offers parents a night off

On Friday, December 15, from 6 until 9 p.m., members of the Virginia Girls Choir will offer parents the opportunity to shop, wrap gifts, decorate, or simply to rest or have a date night amid the busyness of the season.

The choir (girls in grades 5-12), choir parents, and staff will offer “Kids Night Out,” supervised fun for children at St. Stephen’s. Pizza and drinks, games, a holiday movie and a holiday craft are included. The cost is \$25 for the first child, and \$10 for each additional child from the same family. Since this is a fundraiser for the choir, additional donations will gladly and gratefully be accepted. Participating children must be potty trained.

We will also offer the opportunity for people to drop off their holiday gifts and have them wrapped in a separate location, out of view of the children. This service is provided free of charge, but donations are encouraged and appreciated.

Questions? Please contact Kerry Court, the director of the Virginia Girls Choir, at kcourt@ststephensRVA.org. ❀

Forward Movement, the publisher of Forward Day by Day and many other books and spiritual resources, will offer a number of stories and activities on growchristians.org.

Traditional Advent calendars are available in the May Fair House, and the Bookshop @ St. Stephen’s will have some specialty Advent calendars (tactile felt versions for children). ❀

Speakers, retreats, concerts coming in 2018

RETREATS, WORKSHOPS, FORUM SPEAKERS

January 21: The Very Rev. Lucinda Laird

The dean of the American Cathedral in Paris will be the guest speaker in the Sunday Forum.

Friday, February 16 and Saturday, February 17: Br. Luke Ditewig, SSJE

This member of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal order for men, will lead a Lenten retreat on Friday evening and Saturday, and speak in the forum on Sunday, February 18. Additional details will be published in the **Spirit** and **eSpirit**.

March 17 and 18: the Rev. Becca Stevens 'How Love Heals'

Since the Rev. Becca Stevens' last visit to St. Stephen's, she's been named a "CNN Hero" and published a book whose title reflects the basis for Magdalene and Thistle Farms, the ministries she founded: *Love Heals*. This Episcopal priest is chaplain at Vanderbilt University's St. Augustine's Chapel in Nashville. Magdalene helps former sex workers find a safe harbor while they rebuild their lives. Residents work at Thistle Farms, the entrepreneurial venture Stevens also started. Begun to create and sell natural bath and body products, the company now runs a café as well, providing another opportunity for Magdalene residents to acquire job skills. Among Stevens' numerous honors are being named a White House Champion of Change in 2011 and Nashvillian of the Year in 2000, and being inducted into the Tennessee Women's Hall of Fame in 2013.

She will conduct a workshop on Saturday, March 17, beginning at 9 a.m., and will speak in the Sunday Forum on Sunday, March 18.

POETRY READINGS

Natasha Trethewey, former U.S. Poet Laureate,

January 25, 7 p.m. (see page 13)

This reading, though free, is a ticketed event. Visit ststephensRVA.org/poets for ticket information. Donations are most welcome.

Molly McCully Brown, March 15, 7 p.m.

The author of *The Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded*, Molly McCully Brown's poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in *Gulf Coast*, *Pleiades*, *Image*, *TriQuarterly Online*, *Kenyon Review*, *The Adroit Journal*, *The Rumpus*, and elsewhere. Raised in rural Virginia, she holds degrees from Bard College at Simon's Rock and Stanford University.

Haunted by the voices of those committed to the notorious Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded in Amherst County, epicenter of the American eugenics movement in the first half of the twentieth century, this evocative debut marks the emergence of a poet of exceptional poise and compassion, who grew up in the shadow of the institution. Writer Beth Ann Fennelly says, "I am stunned by the power of this deeply imagined collection.

Because the author herself is 'spastic, palsied, and off-balance,' she realizes that, had she been born fifty years earlier, she might have ended up in the infamous Virginia State Colony." (The poet has cerebral palsy.) Visit ststephensRVA.org/poets for links to recent media appearances.

Nathaniel Perry, April 12, 7 p.m.

Perry is the author of *Nine Acres*, winner of the 2011 APR/Honickman First Book Prize. His poems and translations have appeared recently in *American Poetry Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Gettysburg Reviews*, *Bat City Review*, and elsewhere. He is the editor of the *Hampden-Sydney Poetry Review* and associate professor of English at Hampden-Sydney College. He lives with his family in rural southside Virginia. *Nine Acres* is composed of 52 poems, all taking their names from the chapter titles of horticulturalist M.G. Bain's 1935 book on small-farm management, *Five Acres and Independence*. As one reviewer writes, "The poems in his debut collection consider what it means to be faithful—as husband, father, neighbor, and as steward of land, poultry, orchard, and garden...they confront the passions, tedium, graces, and sweat labor of such fidelities both thematically and structurally."

CONCERTS

Carrie Newcomer: Friday, April 6, 2018, at 7 p.m.

Carrie Newcomer—a songwriter, recording artist, performer and educator—will give a concert at St. Stephen's to benefit outreach. Tickets will go on sale in the new year.

Newcomer—a "soaring songstress" (*Billboard*) with "a voice as rich as Godiva chocolate" (*The Austin Statesman*) has toured with Alison Krauss in Europe and the U.S. Nickel Creek recorded Newcomer's song "I Should've Known Better" on their Grammy-winning album "This Side." She was listed as one of the "50 most influential folk musicians of the past 50 years" by Chicago's WFMT and Boston's WBEZ listed her as one of the most influential folk artists of the last 25 years. Newcomer, a contemplative Quaker, cuts across secular and spiritual boundaries. Recent appearances on PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly (the same series that did a segment on our Celtic and Compline services) and Krista Tippett's "On Being," have focused on her use of the creative arts as a spiritual-mindfulness practice, her work in social and environmental justice, interfaith dialogue, and progressive spirituality, and as a champion for a new political conversation.

Choir of Canterbury Cathedral:

Friday, April 13, 2018 (evening; time TBA)

This renowned English choir of men and boys will visit St. Stephen's this spring. The choir sings at daily services in the historic cathedral, providing music which enchants and delights the many thousands of visitors and pilgrims from all over the world, as well as the regular congregation. As the seat of the archbishop of Canterbury, the cathedral has a unique role in the life of the church worldwide. The choristers who travel

are ages 9-13 (though younger boys sing with the choir in residence at the cathedral). They live in the ancient and beautiful Cathedral Choir House and attend St Edmund's School. The choir performs music from a wide repertoire, medieval to modern. Ticket information will be available soon. Plan now to attend this concert featuring one of the finest choirs in the world.

COMING IN OCTOBER 2018

Jean Twenge, Thursday, October 11, 2018

Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?

The cover article in the October 11, 2017 edition of *The New York Times Magazine* examined the soaring incidence of severe anxiety among adolescents in the United States in the years since the introduction of smart phones, and coinciding with other societal and cultural changes. The article—"Why Are More American Teenagers Than Ever Suffering From Severe Anxiety?" by Benoit Denizet-Lewis of Emerson College in Boston—shot to the top of the Times' "most emailed" list and stayed there for about a week. One of the experts quoted in the article was psychologist Jean M. Twenge, professor of psychology at San Diego State University and the author of more than 140 scientific publications and books, including *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood* and an article published in *The Atlantic* and referenced in the Times article, "Have smartphones destroyed a generation?" (September 2017 issue).

Benoit wrote that Twenge "used to be skeptical of those who sounded an alarm about teenage internet use."

"It seemed like too easy an explanation for negative mental-health outcomes in teens," Benoit quotes Twenge, "and there wasn't much evidence for it." But after searching for other possible explanations, including economic ones, she "kept returning to two seemingly unrelated trend lines — depression in teenagers and smartphone adoption. (There is significantly more data about depression than anxiety.) Since 2011, the trend lines increased at essentially the same rate." Dr. Twenge explores this further in her book (*iGen*) and in her article in *The Atlantic*.

Gary Jones and other members of the parish staff were so affected by the article that Gary wondered if St. Stephen's might be able to get Dr. Twenge to visit as part of our community speakers series. The result is that a year to the day after the publication of that article, Jean Twenge will speak at St. Stephen's about what she has learned from her extensive research.

Plan now to attend this compelling presentation. Information about tickets will be available in the spring. ❀



Left to right: the Rev. Becca Stevens in the warehouse of Thistle Farms, the enterprise she founded to provide employment and skills training for women overcoming addiction and leaving the sex trade to build new lives; poet, peacemaker, songwriter and performer Carrie Newcomer; psychologist Jean Twenge; the Choir of Canterbury Cathedral

Former U.S. Poet Laureate to read here

St. Stephen's Church has been eagerly awaiting a visit from poet Natasha Trethewey; she will read from her work here on **Thursday, January 25, at 7 p.m.**

When Trethewey was named the 19th United States Poet Laureate, she chose to relocate to Washington, D.C. in order to work out of the Library of Congress—the first Poet Laureate to do so—as a way of using that most public and visible platform, as Laureate, to invite conversation about the accessibility of, and use for, poetry among a wider audience. She held regular office hours and visited with the public as a way of learning how people perceived poetry in America, how they might better appreciate poetry's position and force in the world, and how we might rethink our attitude toward it: as something to be delighted in, rather than labored through. In her words, poetry “can speak to all of us. It helps us not only to grieve our losses but to celebrate our joys and triumphs. It is open to all of us. It's the best thing we've got. It's the most humane repository for our feelings and our thoughts, our most humane and dignified thoughts.”

When she was appointed for a second term, in 2013, she traveled across the country with an ambitious mission: to examine societal and cultural issues through a poetic lens. Her signature project was a regular feature on the PBS NewsHour, a poetry series called “Where Poetry Lives.” One particularly powerful episode follows Trethewey and NewsHour senior correspondent Jeffrey Brown on a pilgrimage from Mississippi to Alabama as they explore historical struggles and pivotal moments during the country's civil rights movement and the varied roles that poetry played—and still plays—in advancing justice, equality, and freedom.

Trethewey was born in Mississippi in 1966, the daughter of a mixed-race marriage during a time when such a union was illegal. Her mother, black, and her father, white, divorced when Trethewey was six years old and her mother, who remarried, was murdered by her second ex-husband when Trethewey was a freshman in college. Her work explores subjects both personal and historical: she confronts racial tension through the lens of her own life, its trauma and grief, and issues of social justice undergird most of her poems. Academy of American Poets Chancellor Marilyn Nelson has said, “Natasha Trethewey's poems plumb personal and national history to meditate on the conundrum of American racial identities. Whether writing of her complex family torn by tragic loss, or in diverse imagined



By Allison Seay



Natasha Trethewey

voices from the more distant past, Trethewey encourages us to reflect, learn, and experience delight. The wide scope of her interests and her adept handling of form have created an opus of classics both elegant and necessary.”

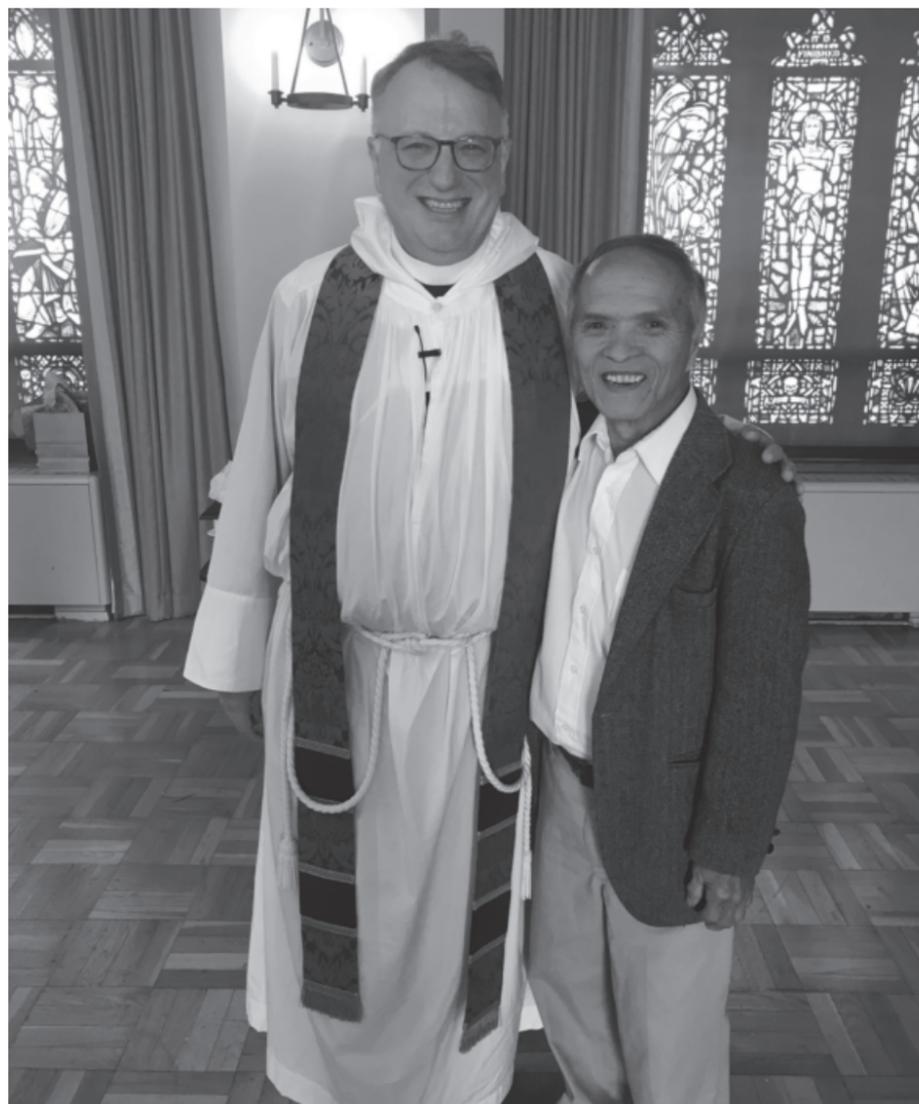
In 2007, Trethewey was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for her collection *Native Guard*, which honors a black regiment of Union soldiers who played an essential role in the Civil War guarding Confederate prisoners; it also serves as a poignant elegy for her mother. Her most recent book of poems, *Thrall*, reads as a kind of follow up, continuing a probe of racial attitudes and stereotypes through both personal and historical lenses, exploring the ways in which we are held captive—

literally and figuratively—by the circumstances of our birth, our families, our memories, our own identity, and our collective history. As one critic, Christine Swint, writes in the journal *Five Points*, “[*Thrall* allows readers to] gain entrance into Trethewey's personal history as well as the history of the colonies, and by extension, the emotional tenor of our contemporary times, in which we as a culture still discuss, or refuse to discuss, the effects of slavery and patriarchal, top-down histories.” *Thrall* also honors her late father and examines the complexities and tensions of that relationship.

While Trethewey currently serves in the English Department at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, she has some Virginia roots; she earned a Master of Arts degree in both English and Creative Writing from Hollins University before going on to receive her MFA in poetry from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She is among the nation's most revered poets and one of our most important voices. She is the first African American to be named Poet Laureate since Rita Dove, who has said of Trethewey's work that it “reclaim[s] for us that interior life where the true self flourishes and to which we return, in solitary reverie, for strength.”

Trethewey's poetry collections as well as her acclaimed nonfiction book, *Beyond Katrina: A Meditation on the Mississippi Gulf Coast*, are available in the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's. Her reading is free and open to the public. Donations are welcome; registration is required. Visit ststephensRVA.org/speakers for a registration link. ❀

Gene LeCouteur accepts call to Emmanuel, Middleburg



Sarah Bartenstein

The Rev. Gene LeCouteur was celebrated at a reception on his last Sunday at St. Stephen's, and colleague Sun Ho Nuon—who retired recently—was on hand to say goodbye, along with other staff and parishioners.

Gene LeCouteur, who arrived at St. Stephen's Church in June 2008 as a summer intern working in the front office and went on to teach classes and Bible study, participate as a catechist in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, coordinate our celebrated speakers series, help found our farmers market and our bookshop, preach and lead worship as a lay person and eventually as a priest, concluded his ministry at St. Stephen's October 1. On November 1, he began a new call as rector of Emmanuel Church in Middleburg, Virginia (not far from former colleague Weston Mathews, now the rector of Grace Church, the Plains). Gene also led or participated in pilgrimages and mission trips to Italy, Ireland, South Africa, and the Dominican Republic, and worked with families of babies and children about to be baptized.

In a letter to the parish, Gene said that “what has been most special was getting to know the many people that make St. Stephen's the wonderful community that it is. I am a certified introvert, but you brought out the best in me. You made it possible to live into all of the opportunities afforded me here. You supported me and encouraged me as I walked the journey to ordination. You celebrated with me as I was ordained to the diaconate and the priesthood.”

Gary Jones, who has known Gene for more than 36 years, since they were co-workers at a gourmet food shop in Chapel Hill, called this “a momentous event for all concerned.” He continued, “The people of Emmanuel Church are understandably as excited as they can be, and we are feeling a variety of emotions: sadness that we are saying good-bye to a beloved pastor, teacher, spiritual guide, and friend; happiness for Gene, as he embarks on this new chapter of ministry; and pride that we are contributing to the building up of the larger Episcopal Church and the Diocese of Virginia by sending one of our finest and best-prepared clergy to lead another excellent parish church.”

Gary said, “Gene has poured his heart and soul into our common ministry, because he believes deeply in what we are doing together at St. Stephen's and because he loves you. Now it is our turn to pour our heart and soul into thanking Gene for his ministry and wishing him well in this exciting, new chapter.” Gary expressed confidence that we'd stay in touch with Gene: “We love him, and he loves us, too much. It's why he and I have been friends for the past 36 years and always will be.” ❀

St. Stephen's Church is showing another way

We have work to do together



Briget Ganske photos

Through ministries such as our food pantry, our medical mission trips, our city jail visits and CARITAS, St. Stephen's strives to keep Christ at the center of our lives. We feed the hungry, we care for the sick, we visit the prisoner, and we welcome the stranger.

And through prayer, Bible study, educational offerings and community building efforts, we seek to promote Christ at the center of our individual lives, our families, friendships and community. St. Stephen's is devoted to hope and healing for a stressed and divided world.

There is a cost to this work.

Over the last several years, the vestry and rector of St. Stephen's Church have adopted the tithe (10 percent) as their personal standard of giving for our church's ministries. Those who are not already giving a tithe have pledged to work systematically to achieve that minimum goal. We invite all parishioners to join us in this spiritual commitment, one we believe is an expression of gratitude to God.

"God asks us to do important things with our lives. But we can't do them alone. That's why the church is here: to do this work together."

Inspired by the breadth and depth of our ministries and outreach, churches from across the country—and as far away as Australia—seek guidance from our clergy and staff. With the number of our worship offerings and our welcoming spirit, we are attracting local attention as well: our average Sunday attendance of over 1,200 places St. Stephen's fourth among all Episcopal churches in the country. Word is spreading that ours is a parish of vibrant life and commitment. But we still lag behind our peer Episcopal churches in per capita giving, with our peers having \$1.5 million to \$7 million more in pledge income than we have.

The great news is that we made significant progress last year as a parish, and the pledges turned in so far this year show even greater increases. Our folks are serious. And as more and more people decide to give in proportion to what they have, using the biblical tithe as their guide, we are going to be increasingly amazed at what God can do through our parish.

If you are already a pledging member of St. Stephen's Church, please accept our deep gratitude for your support; if you have not yet pledged for 2018 we ask you to reaffirm your financial commitment to St. Stephen's. If you have not made a pledge in the past, please remember: even if you give to St. Stephen's regularly (thank you!), unless you fill out a pledge form online or a pledge card, the vestry's ability to plan and budget for our ministries for 2018 is diminished.

Pledge cards are available at the church doors and throughout the parish house, or you may pledge online at ststephensRVA.org/pledge.

Pause for a moment to consider the importance of St. Stephen's to your life, to your family, to our community, and to the world beyond. And with this importance fixed firmly in mind, we ask that you join us as we strive to do God's work in the world.

God asks us to do important things with our lives. But we can't do them alone. That's why the church is here: to do this work together.

The world is full of stress, greed, competition and conflict. St. Stephen's Church shows another way. In the midst of bad news, we offer good news. Let your pledge show where you are focusing your life. ❖

Annual Giving Campaign Co-Chairs

Braxton Hill
Calle Luke
Malcolm Randolph

OUR PLEDGES WORKING TOGETHER ❖ GOD'S POWER WORKING IN US

Legacy Society thrives under excellent leadership

Several years ago, parishioner John Sherman suggested that St. Stephen's Church give more focused attention to planned giving and the building of St. Stephen's endowment. The rector and vestry heartily approved. And since John Sherman had the vision, passion, and commitment to the cause, he agreed to chair the effort.

St. Stephen's is one of the largest and most vibrant churches in the Episcopal Church. Despite being in the "top 10" in our denomination, however, our financial resources lag far behind those of our peer churches. While the leadership of this parish church has managed these resources in a wise, strategic manner, we know that we could do so much more in the name of Christ. What's more, we want to ensure the continuing vitality of this flagship church through planned giving and a healthier endowment fund.

With John Sherman's leadership, the rector and vestry established the "Legacy Society" and appointed a steering committee to encourage planned giving, to remind parishioners to inform the parish if they have included the church in their plans, and

to educate the parish about how to include this kind of giving in their stewardship.

Now the Legacy Society has materials to support its work, including a brochure and information

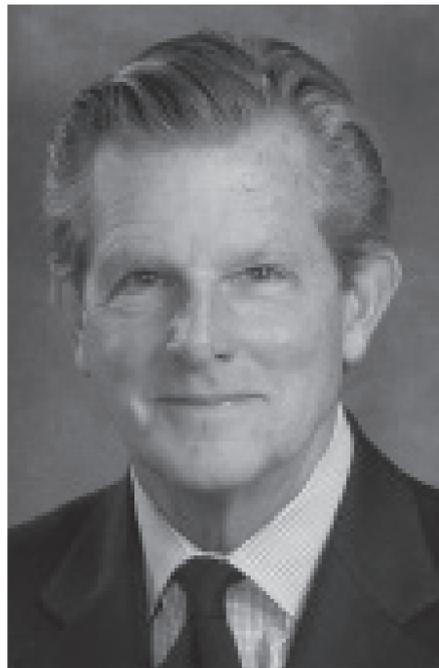
on our Web site, and members of the steering committee have met with donors and potential donors to encourage participation. The membership of the society—which includes any who designate any amount as a bequest to St. Stephen's Church continues to grow.

Recently John announced his plans to step down as chairman of the society—though he will continue to serve on the steering committee—and John Crowder has agreed to succeed him. Gary Jones says the parish could not be more fortunate.

"These two men are deeply devoted to St. Stephen's," the rector said. "John Sherman and John Crowder love the church, are steadfastly loyal, and are committed to seeing our church endowed with the resources it needs in order to thrive for generations to come."

Both John Sherman and John Crowder have served on St. Stephen's vestry, and both have chaired our annual giving campaign in the past, giving them valuable insight into the needs of the parish and the resources that could be deployed to serve God through the ministries of St. Stephen's.

The rector and vestry of St. Stephen's are deeply grateful to both men: to John Sherman for his vision and leadership, and to John Crowder for his enthusiasm about assuming the reins of this most important effort for the well-being of St. Stephen's Church. ❀



John Crowder



John Sherman



Now the Legacy Society has materials to support its work, including a brochure and information

Legacy Society Steering Committee

All members of the steering committee have joined the Legacy Society.

John W. Bates III
Richard M. Clary
Deborah Dunlap
Mary Lou M. Gambill
Allen C. Goolsby
Laurie Jarrett Rogers
Wesley Wright, Jr.
The Rev. Gary D. Jones, Rector

JB Burtch
John P. Crowder, Chairman
Anne Thomas Hines
L.H. Ginn III
Calle Luke
John Sherman, Jr.
Martha Orr Proutt, Ex officio

How to become a member of the Legacy Society

Those who have made provision for the ongoing vitality of St. Stephen's Church in their estate planning are considered members of the Legacy Society. There are many ways to do this, from bequests to trusts to life insurance, and members of the Legacy Society Committee are happy to discuss these options in light of your individual goals and circumstances. Planned giving can be an option regardless of means or age. You may pick up a Legacy Society brochure at any Welcome Table or Information Central and complete the form enclosed, or contact any member of the steering committee or Janet Allen in the parish office, jallen@ststephensRVA.org, 804.288.2867.

ststephensRVA.org/legacy

A way to ensure the vitality of our ministries

By John Sherman

Many people find the end of the year a good time to review their investment strategies and think about making charitable contributions over and above their regular annual giving. The vestry and the steering committee of St. Stephen's Legacy Society encourage you to include this parish church in your year-end giving and your planned giving.

One tool for planned giving is a gift annuity. The Trustees of the Funds of the Diocese of Virginia have created gift annuities for the benefit of parishioners and the churches of our diocese. The Trustees of the Funds manage about \$140 million for churches throughout our diocese, including St. Stephen's Endowment.

This annuity provides an attractive interest rate while the donor is alive, and 100 percent of the annuity goes to support the ministries of St. Stephen's Church after the giver dies. This instrument also offers tax advantages; as with any such investment, you should review the details with your financial and legal advisers.

Current interest rates, tied to the owner's age, are as follows.

Age 60: 4.4 percent
Age 65: 4.7 percent
Age 70: 5.1 percent
Age 75: 5.8 percent

Interest rates are subject to change based on current rates at the time the contract is initiated.

For additional details, please contact Mike Kerr, chief executive officer of the Trustees of the Funds, 804.334.8853, mkerr@trusteesofthefunds.org.

When you include St. Stephen's Church in your estate plans, you are considered a member of the Legacy Society. Those of any age and any means are eligible—no amount is too large or too small. Our goal is to increase the corpus of St. Stephen's Endowment to ensure the vitality of our ministries for generations to come. The endowment currently stands at about \$5.5 million—a much smaller sum than the endowments of our peer churches throughout the Episcopal Church. We are grateful to all who have included St. Stephen's in their wills, including the living members who have pledged a total of \$6 million to \$7 million through planned giving. ❀

Are you called to fast?

Fasting is an ancient discipline of the church. It is a means of drawing closer to Christ through our intentional self-emptying, through a spiritual union with the poor and hungry, and through a heightened awareness of God's presence in our life. Lent is an especially appropriate time for fasting; it is commended to us in the Book of Common Prayer.

Come to an introductory session on **Tuesday, February 20, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**, to explore whether the Spirit is inviting you to a three-day Lenten fast. Following a discussion of spiritual fasting, each participant can decide whether this might be part of his or her Lenten discipline this year. The fast will begin on Wednesday, February 21 and conclude at Evensong on Friday, February 23. Coming to the February 20 session does not obligate anyone to fast; it is an opportunity for prayerful reflection.

If you are interested, please contact Claudia Merritt, 804.288.2867 or cmerritt@ststephensRVA.org. Online and clipboard sign-ups will be available beginning in February. ❀

Seasons of the Spirit Advent/Christmas/Epiphany Winter 2017

Issue Number 26

Parish Staff

To reach a staff member, call 804.288.2867. To send an email to a member of the staff, use the initial and name provided in parentheses, with @ststephensRVA.org. (If no email is listed, it means that the staff member does not have a St. Stephen's email address.)

Janet S. Allen (jallen), *Associate for Development & Operations*
Stan Barnett (sbarnett), *Coordinator of Kitchen Ministry*
Sarah R. Bartenstein (sbartenstein), *Director of Communication*
Deonte Campbell, *Sexton*
Marion S. Chenault (mchenault), *Preschool Director (288-6401)*
Dawn Childs (dchilds), *Assistant for Children's Music Ministry*
Donald Clements, *Sexton*
Kerry Court (kcourt), *Director, Virginia Girls Choir*
Sarah-Keel Crews (skcrews), *Youth Ministry Coordinator*
Sean Dobb, *Sexton*
Kyle Dosier (farmersmarket), *Assistant Market Manager*
Chris Edwards (cedwards), *Director, St. Stephen's Choir*
Melissa Hipes (mhipes), *Finance Manager*
Chris Holman, *Sexton*
The Rev. Gary D. Jones (gjones), *Rector*
Moriah Karn (mkarn), *Café Manager, Market Manager*
Greta Kidd (weddings), *Wedding Coordinator*
Deborah Lawrence (dlawrence), *Director of Outreach*
Betsy Lee (blee), *Office Manager & Pastoral Care Assistant*
Becky Lehman (blehman), *Assistant for Hospitality & Communication*
Christi McFadden (cmcfadden), *Finance Assistant*
The Rev. Stephen Y. McGehee (smcgehee), *Associate Rector*
The Rev. Claudia W. Merritt (cmerritt), *Priest Associate*
The Rev. Penny A. Nash (pnash), *Associate Rector*
Ben Nelson (bnelson), *Sexton, Pressman, Sunday Community Supper chef*
Matthew Oltmann, *Sexton*
The Rev. William L. Sachs (bsachs), *Priest Associate*
Allison Seay (aseay), *Associate for Religion & the Arts*
Steven Simon (ssimon), *Facilities Manager*
Michael Simpson (msimpson), *Director of Celtic Service Musicians*
Jessica Framme Smith (jsmith), *Outreach Assistant*
Elizabeth Spell (weddings), *Wedding Coordinator*
Wei-Li Suen, *Palmer Hall accompanist*
Michael E. Sweeney (msweeney), *Director of Family Ministries*
Greg Vick (gvick), *Principal Organist*

Vestry

Term expires 2018

John Barr
JB Burtch, *Senior Warden*
Mac Purrington
Taylor Raquet
Laurie Rogers, *Junior Warden*
Beth Smith, *Assistant Treasurer*

Term Expires 2019

John Bates, *Treasurer*
Judy Buchanan
Marie Carter
Calle Luke
Mac McElroy
David Wise

Term expires 2020

Melinda Hardy
Braxton Hill, *Register*
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Women of St. Stephen's program remembers pioneering female photographer

This year's 'Ladies Night Out' to feature dinner and one-woman play

Several years ago, the Women of St. Stephen's began a new tradition of offering a dinner program in February, a departure from the regular pattern of a Tuesday morning program every month. In addition to a speaker, the evening includes an elegant reception, a delicious dinner, and fellowship. The guests at Ladies Night Out are so often those serving—whether preparing receptions or meals, preparing the church for worship as members of the altar guild, arranging flowers for the flower guild, cooking for the May Fair House, and more—this evening is an opportunity for others to serve them.

This year's dinner will take place **Thursday, February 1**, with a reception at 6 p.m. followed by dinner. The offering will be a one-act, one-woman play, "A Song in the Wilderness," written and directed by Larry Gard, artistic director for the Carpenter Science Theatre at the Science Museum of Virginia. The play focuses on the life of Gene Stratton-Porter, a renowned early 20th century nature photographer and writer from Indiana who was well ahead of her time. From 1993 to 1997, Mr. Gard and his wife Marcia—the actress playing Stratton-Porter—presented the play throughout Indiana. They presented it in 2002 at the Science Museum after the Gards moved to Richmond. The play was revived in 2016, but Mrs. Gard died in December 2016. Michelle Morris steps into the role here at St. Stephen's.

Paid reservations (\$25) in the parish office are required by **Monday, January 29**, or sooner, if capacity is reached. Don't delay—this event fills up! ❖

Faith and art: a book study

By Claudia Merritt

When we think about faith, what comes to mind for many of us is doctrine, scripture or behavior—knowing right from wrong and acting accordingly. That may be too narrow. Faith is so much more. It is growing to know more God intimately. In addition to these avenues to the spiritual life, we can nurture our relationship with God through music, art, story and poetry. These doorways to our faith open us to subtler ways God may be working in us and revealing God's self to us.

The late Madeleine L'Engle (*A Wrinkle in Time*, *The Irrational Season* and other books), wrote about the place of the arts in our spiritual life in her book *Walking on Water*. This is not a new book, but it is timely as we try to engage our faith more deeply and in fresh ways. On five Tuesdays this winter—**January 8, 22, 29 and February 5 and 12**—I will lead a group, 7:00-8:30 p.m., to read and ponder L'Engle's book.

Sign up online at ststephensRVA.org/groups or use the sign-up sheet near Information Central. If you have questions, please contact me at 804.288.2867 or cmerritt@ststephensRVA.org. ❖

