

Connect and reflect on the ministries of St. Stephen's

I'm a geek about human growth and development. So I was fascinated by a recent study examining the impact of having people write about their core values. The study demonstrated that reflecting on core values leads not only to feeling more positive emotions such as "loving" and "connected," but also leads to actually acting in more compassionate ways. How cool is that? The process of identifying values and thinking deeply about them seems to have a centering effect on us humans, reminding us of what matters most and leading us to act in better alignment with what we care about.



By Susan Wilkes

In recent weeks, "ministry liaisons" have been leading interested parishioners through a process of reflecting on the core values of St. Stephen's. The word cloud shown on this page reveals some preliminary ideas for what the core values of St. Stephen's might be. I'm eager to see not only what values we identify but also how our parish-wide work reflecting on our core values might affect us. Will our growing clarity about what matters most to us at St. Stephen's lead us, through our many ministries, to act in even more effective and compassionate ways?

In addition to the work on core values, each ministry area has been reviewing their history and discussing how their ministry has evolved over time. Ministry liaison Catherine Whitham, who piloted the process with the healing prayer ministers early this fall, says that "every single person was eager to share experiences" and that it was powerful to understand more about the "profound connection" parishioners feel through their involvement in the ministry. Interestingly, many in



the session also remarked on the rapid pace of change and how the prayer requests have changed over the past 10 years.

This is exactly our hope about all of these sessions—that they provide time to connect with others interested in a particular ministry, to deepen understanding of how we are touched by the ministry, and to trace how it has evolved over time. The word "joy" in the word cloud is in smaller type, but it's definitely there, on the right side, next to beauty and excellence. We hope joy is part of this process, too, as we all consider the rich history of our ministries and reflect on what really matters at St. Stephen's.

The meeting times for all of these sessions are posted on the Envisioning Our Future page of the parish Web site at ststephensrva.org/future. All are welcome to join one or more of these important conversations; no sign-up is needed. Many meetings have already occurred, but there will be additional opportunities to participate in this two-year process. ❀