

seasons of
the **SPRINT**

Membership
has its privileges

There's a saying that some people are born on third base and go through life thinking they hit a triple.

I've been thinking lately about our need for affirmation, our insatiable egos, our empty boasting. So it's refreshing to meet people who were born on third base and go through life with a sense of humility about their privilege and the responsibility it brings. In my experience, such people often have a kind of joy and lightness of being about them. They convey happiness and contentment, even as they take the lowest place at the table and think more highly of others than they do of themselves.



By Gary D. Jones

But there's another saying popularized by the folks at American Express: "Membership has its privileges." And if you are a member of the wealthy class, the white race, a resident in a certain zip code, or an alumnus of a prominent school, you might know something about such privileges and how nice they are, how addicting they can be.

Recently, I met with a friend and successful businessman who knew he had been born on third base and had a refreshing sense of modesty and responsibility about that. But he also knows that "membership has its privileges." And a few years ago, an economic downturn, some catastrophic changes in his business, and a cutthroat corporate environment made him panic that he might lose the benefits to which he had grown accustomed.

In fact, he began to realize that he not only enjoyed the privileges of membership, so to speak, but that he had spent much of his life trying to ensure that his wife and children enjoyed them, too. That meant, of course, a certain kind of house in a certain kind of neighborhood. It meant particular schools, cars, clothes, vacations, and social activities. In other words, such membership has its costs, too. And when his business started to tank, my friend realized acutely that his membership might get revoked.

Of course, he was not alone. Others were feeling the same downward spiral. In just three years, two of his friends in similar situations who died by suicide. It was a powerful wake up call for my friend.

Lent is the season when we join Jesus in the wilderness, stepping back from the various memberships conferred on us by school, society, family, race, economic status, and so on. We join Jesus in the wilderness, in hopes of re-connecting with our souls, our true selves. One way of thinking about what the Tempter was doing with Jesus in the wilderness is that he was saying, "Look, Jesus, your membership has its privileges. If you want, you can change this stone to bread, you can have all this authority, you can jump from this pinnacle. You're different from everyone else. You're special."

Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights resisting the temptation to think of himself as different from other human beings. He saw himself as one who came to serve, not to be served. And in some of the earliest writings from the movement Jesus began, St. Paul was clear: we are all members of the same body, every one of us "members of one another." My well-being is dependent on your well-being. If you are injured, I suffer. "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep," Paul said. All humanity is connected in this way, regardless of nationality, race, or creed—the chief insight of monotheism is that we are all equally beloved children of the same God. In Christ there is no Jew or Greek, no American or Mexican.

The 17th century priest and poet, John Donne, said something similar: "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main... Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee."

Scientists say that the same is true of nature: that trees, for example, communicate with each other and care for each other below and above ground. When one tree is cut down, those around it suffer. And what we are learning, painfully, about climate change is that we are all a part of each other across species – any loss of species diminishes the whole, a process that has reached a crisis point. "If one member suffers, all suffer together," Paul says; and with a prescience that astonishes, he also said, "All creation groans with eager longing."

Our insatiable egos will from time to time tempt us to believe that we are special, that we stand apart. Remember Jesus' parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector: "The Pharisee, standing apart by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'" But the branch separated from the vine always withers. And isn't it moving that Jesus would be crucified with criminals, saying to the thief, "Today, you will be with me in paradise." Everyone, all creation, belongs. Our true membership is in Christ.

And yes, this membership has its privileges. It is the privilege of "loving one another as Christ loves us; doing to others as we would have them do to us; forgiving as we have been forgiven; not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, but living in harmony with each other; not being haughty, but associating with the lowly." And this, our true membership, is not something we need to acquire, because we already have it. It comes with the package of being human. But Lent is our acknowledgment that sometimes we have to go into the wilderness to discover what we already have: It is the peace of God which passes all understanding. It is freedom. It is what we will celebrate again this Easter—resurrection. ✿

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Employment initiative opens its doors with a new name

Episcopal Community Services is now RE:work RICHMOND

By Deb Lawrence

RE:work RICHMOND REAL PEOPLE. REAL JOBS. REAL OPPORTUNITY.

The non-profit organization St. Stephen's has formed with St. Peter's Episcopal Church to focus on employment assistance is open for business and has a new name. **RE:work RICHMOND**, formerly Episcopal Community Services, began operations on February 4. The new name is the result of conversations with other faith communities and business leaders who expressed a desire to participate but were hesitant because the original name suggested it was limited to Episcopal involvement. St. Stephen's parishioner Freddy Moore and his team at Big River Advertising pitched the new name to the organization's board, who approved it unanimously.

The Rev. Andrew Terry, rector of St. Peter's and RE:work's executive director, notes, "When we see 'RE:' in an email, it means 'in reference to' or 'regarding.' Therefore, our mission is regarding work. We are putting work—not just any work, but the right living-wage career—at the heart of what we do."

The focus on connecting people with the right career, and work that offers a living wage, sets RE:work apart from other employment programs. We are not simply attempting to connect people with a job, any job. So we must think differently, and "re-work" how we relate to one another in Richmond and how we understand East End residents. These are our neighbors who have talents and gifts; they are worthy of dignity and respect. The fact that two churches from separate parts of town have come together, along with

The focus on connecting people with the right career, and work that offer a living wage, sets RE:work apart from other employment programs.



Jay Paul

Left to right: Diana Vasquez, director of employment services; Andrew Terry, executive director; Deb Lawrence, president of the board; Reggie Gordon of the City of Richmond; and Ferdie Baruch, director of development and corporate relations, at the opening celebration of RE:work on February 4.

a public entity, the city's Office of Community Wealth Building, is definitely a "re-working" of how employment programs usually operate.

So the name RE:work RICHMOND is meaningful and intentional in several ways.

RE:work has begun its pilot year with five people and their families recommended by the organization's East End partners: Anna Julia Cooper School, Peter Paul Development Center, Fairfield County Elementary School, Armstrong High School, and Challenge Discovery Projects. Diana Vasquez, director of employment services for RE:work, is already engaged with each participant, helping them navigate the path out of poverty in order to gain and sustain living-wage careers.

Ferdie Baruch, RE:work's director of development and corporate relations, is in touch with prospective employers across our region and putting together a database of partners with whom the participants will be able to access well-suited living-wage careers. With support from volunteers offering coaching on résumé writing, soft skills, financial literacy and other things, a network of support will provide tools for families to succeed and thrive.

If you are interested in being a part of RE:work, or want to learn more, contact Deb Lawrence, 804.288.2867 or dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org. ❖

Chicken! Beans! Spices! Rice!



By Josh Rockett

A picture hangs in the food pantry/grocery store at St. Stephen's that is probably my favorite picture in the whole church. It is a simple graphic of a loaf of bread. Under the bread are the words: "Our unity is in this loaf."

I love this piece because feeding the hungry and breaking bread with people is fundamental to the Christian experience. This sentiment is the motivation behind a new food ministry initiative that distributes a complete chicken and rice meal kit to families in need. It has four ingredients: chicken, beans, spices and rice. This meal is shelf-stable and easy-to-cook. It is completely assembled by volunteers, who scoop rice, beans and spices into a plastic container along with a can of chicken. Youth preparing for confirmation who attended their "lock-in" February 8 assembled around 40 of these meal kits for the weekly distribution. Once we hone the program at St. Stephen's, we'll consider offering meal kits to our other partners in the community.

Want to help or learn more? Send me an email, jrockett@ststephensRVA.org.



Andy Russell

Members of the youth confirmation class assembled kits during a recent confirmation lock-in (overnight retreat).



Contents of the kit: a can of white chicken, rice, spices and beans.

Getting proximate: two perspectives

This summer, youth will consider, 'Who is my neighbor?'

I lived in an intentional community two years ago in Atlanta. Our program director often challenged us to “get proximate.” Getting proximate meant diving into a new community, engaging with others humbly and generously, and questioning our assumptions about the “right” way to live. We weren’t there to live and let live; we were there to live purposefully with others.



By Andy Russell

Our youth in-town mission week is about getting proximate in our own city.

On one level, this seems silly. Most of us live in or just outside of Richmond; how can we be any more proximate? But if we ponder this idea, it becomes clear that even within Richmond, we are definitely more proximate to some things than to others: our specific communities, the places we go for school, work, and play, the landscapes that are habitually a part of our lives.

It’s completely natural for us to establish these comfortable and familiar patterns. Yet our call as Christians is to live more deeply. It is to love our neighbor as ourselves and, perhaps more importantly, ask the fundamental question, “Who is my neighbor?” But you have to be proximate to ask the question. You have to be proximate in order to love.

During this youth mission, there are two communities with which we will get especially proximate, the neighborhoods of the East End and Richmond Hill, a retreat center and intentional community (see page 6). We will meet with staff



Participants in a summer in-town mission week for youth held in 2017.

and students at Anna Julia Cooper School to learn about the challenges and hopes of children living in poverty. We will visit neighborhoods, Peter Paul Development Center, and Child Savers to better understand the systemic challenges that impoverished families and communities face and what we can do to support them. We will walk the Slave Trail and volunteer at Shalom Farms to grow in appreciation for the literal land on which we live—land that has seen enslavement and oppression but also bursts forth with sustainable food increasingly accessible to all. We will participate in the rhythm of life at Richmond Hill, eating, praying, and reflecting together alongside the community there. We will grow closer to one another.

Being proximate can be unsettling. It often means leaving the known to explore the unknown, and that takes courage. But a deeper life is found in getting closer, not further, from one another. In an age that is increasingly characterized by social anxiety and loneliness, God challenges us to recognize our common humanity, our oneness. Being one Body doesn’t mean being the same—it means being together. And what does it mean to be together? Let’s get proximate and find out. ❖

IN-TOWN MISSION

June 25-July 1, 2019; registration due March 17
Register at ststephensRVA.org/youthmission
Questions: arussell@ststephensRVA.org

A journey on the Walking School Bus

On a cold, early January morning at 8:15, I embarked on foot from the entrance to Fairfield Court Elementary School for my maiden voyage on the “Walking School Bus,” an initiative aimed at reducing high levels of tardiness and absenteeism among the school’s at-risk children. Along with Suzanne Blevins, the Communities in Schools site coordinator at Fairfield Court (and daily “bus driver” for the Walking School Bus), we set off on the route, which consists of a circuit through the Fairfield Court housing community. We stopped at each apartment where a participating student resides to knock on the door, say hello, and collect another “passenger” to join us for the rest of the route, culminating back at the schoolhouse door.



By Tom Cox

Along the route, children skipped, giggled, argued, and competed for the honor of holding the street crossing flag while the group filed safely across each traffic intersection. A pair of brothers (ages 8 and 6) stayed close by my side every step of the way as we brought up the rear of the “bus.” Throughout the trip, the older brother animatedly regaled me with details about Spiderman’s super-powers and encounters with radioactive animals, while his younger brother marched along in silence, one hand holding mine while the other clutched two marbles he had discovered on the sidewalk. We all arrived safely at school before 9:00, the children still exhibiting the boundless energy of elementary students everywhere, and me possessing an enhanced understanding of the source of Spiderman’s powers. I decided to return the following week.

It can be difficult to gauge the effectiveness of educational initiatives, especially in their early stages, but data compiled by Communities in Schools indicates that the Walking School Bus has had a major positive effect on both absenteeism and tardiness at Fairfield Court Elementary School. Among the 18 students selected by school and CIS staff to participate during the first four months of the program, absenteeism rates were reduced by more than one-third. Even more impressively, tardiness rates for those students declined by a remarkable 75 percent. Because of the Walking School Bus, some of the students most at-risk were more frequently in their classrooms at the opening bell, ready for an entire day’s academic instruction.



‘Mr. Tom’ walks a group of Fairfield students to school on a recent Monday.

Bryan Stevenson, the brilliant death penalty lawyer, author of the book *Just Mercy*, and founder of the Equal Justice Initiative and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, spoke at Virginia Commonwealth University last year. When asked what individuals wanting to address societal injustices should do, his first response was simple: “Get proximate,” he said; strive to connect on a personal level with individuals and communities we hope to help empower. His words inspired me to take a small step out of my comfort zone by volunteering as a mentor at Fairfield Court Elementary School. I have now added the Walking School Bus to my schedule for one day each week. My hope is that by experiencing proximity through interactions and relationships with children at Fairfield Court, I might play at least a small role in addressing identified needs. Who knows? I might even take a small step toward achieving some transformation of my own.

St. Stephen’s offers multiple opportunities to become proximate with our neighbors in the East End, both through long-time ministries (such as volunteer mentoring or tutoring at Fairfield Court Elementary School and Anna Julia Cooper School) and new efforts, including the Walking School Bus and RE:work RICHMOND. This summer’s in-town experience for youth is another way (see article above). If you are interested in volunteering or want more information, contact Josh Rockett, jrockett@ststephensRVA.org, or Deb Lawrence, dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org. ❖



A view of El Paso, Texas, from Ciudad Juárez, on the Mexican side of the southern border wall.

Two thousand people are released weekly by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement into the hospitality of Annunciation House in El Paso, Texas. Many of them are families who have waited their turn to cross the border and request asylum. If Annunciation House had space for 2,500, it would be 2,500, said its founder and director, Ruben Garcia, to a group of Episcopal Church leaders who traveled to El Paso during Advent to learn firsthand about the situation there.

Asylees receive food, a bed, toiletries, a care package, access to a shower and help contacting relatives to arrange travel. Within 48 hours, they are placed on buses or airplanes to reunite with family members in other parts of the United States.

“The vast majority of people have someone,” Garcia said.

Most come from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, but others are from Nicaragua, Brazil, Cuba, Venezuela, and even from such distant countries as India. Some are fleeing violence, some come for economic opportunities, others are escaping persecution, religious or otherwise.

On December 13, more than two dozen people from a variety of Episcopal congregations gathered in Southwest Texas for what they called an “El Paso Pilgrimage.” The Rev. Gary Jones, rector of St. Stephen’s, initiated the pilgrimage out of a desire to counter a narrative that vilifies asylum seekers as drug dealers and rapists, when in fact they are fleeing for their lives and their livelihoods, trying to keep their families safe.

Gary is part of a colleagues group consisting of the rectors and deans of urban and suburban parishes and cathedrals throughout the Episcopal Church. As pre-election rhetoric about immigrants became increasingly hostile, he polled his colleagues about whether they were willing to travel to the border to see for themselves who was part of the caravan of people being demonized. We do not need to agree about politics or immigration policy, he believed, to acknowledge that referring to human beings as “animals” is not what Christians are called to do. Would these church leaders be able to go to the border, not to demonstrate or intervene or attract media coverage, but simply to act as witnesses to the belief that immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees are children of God?

Soon, nearly 30 people had said yes, and with help from staff at Trinity, Wall Street, the pilgrimage came together. The group included clergy and lay people, church employees and volunteers. One person had recently retired from a distinguished career in the U.S. State Department. Now a parishioner at St. John’s Cathedral in Jacksonville, Florida, he previously served as the head of the Immigration Processing Center in Juárez, Mexico, the largest immigration processing center in the world.

Traveling with Gary were Sarah Bartenstein, St. Stephen’s director of communications, and Josh Rockett, outreach coordinator.

After their arrival in El Paso, the pilgrims’ first stop was Annunciation House, where participants heard a briefing from Garcia, who has worked on the border for 40 years, witnessing and responding to various migrant and refugee surges over the years.

‘I’m really glad we went to the camp — I won’t call it a shelter, it’s not a shelter — it’s a concentration camp for children,’ said the Rev. Stephen Carlsen, dean and rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis.

“The phenomenon of refugees is not an El Paso problem, it’s a U.S. problem,” said Garcia.

“Right now, because of [U.S.] enforcement, we are seeing changes that make life miserable,” he said. “The border has become a very complicated place.”

When Annunciation House began its ministry 40 years ago, it was primarily serving men who would come to the United States for seasonal work, return home to be with their families and later return for work. In 1996, when the last legislative change in immigration law made it impossible to come and go, the men could no longer go home and instead stayed.

“Once they make the decision to stay, they lose family,” Garcia said.

With the mid-1990s change in immigration law, the undocumented population rose from 6 million to 12 million by 2004, as men sought family reunification and women and children began arriving. Today, 11 million undocumented immigrants reside in the United States; some have been living in hiding for 20 years or more, he said.

Upon arrival, migrants and asylum seekers are faced with either pleading their cases to agents at designated points of entry or climbing over walls and crossing rivers to plead their case upon apprehension by agents of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, or CBP, Garcia explained.

A couple of weeks before the Episcopal pilgrims’ trip, asylum seekers had been sleeping on the bridge so as not to lose their place in line, as typically 20 people are allowed to enter at a time. Then, in an effort to clear the bridge, CBP began issuing numbers, written in magic marker on asylum seekers’ arms to keep track of their place in line, he said.

From there, they are sent to shelters in Ciudad Juárez, just across the border, to wait their turn.

The Episcopal pilgrims arrived in El Paso just as news broke of the death of a 7-year-old Guatemalan girl in U.S. Border Patrol custody a day after she, her father and 161 other migrants surrendered to agents after crossing illegally into New Mexico. (Soon after the pilgrims returned home, another child’s death was reported.)

For the pilgrims, it was a stark reminder of the perilous journey migrants and asylum seekers face, as well as the outdated U.S. immigration system and the Trump administration’s response to the current humanitarian crisis on the Southwestern border. The government has sent at least 8,000 troops to the border in an attempt to deter crossings. (At this writing, more than 3,000 more were set to be deployed.) Still, migrants continue to arrive in caravans.

“I wanted to see with my own eyes what’s going on,” said the Ven. Juan Sandoval, an archdeacon in the Diocese of Atlanta and a third-generation Mexican-American who grew up in Phoenix.



Gary Jones driving into Ciudad Juárez from El Paso.

“It just seemed instead of the military, you should be sending churches and aid workers, people who can help,” he said.

That’s where the faith communities come in. Mostly, hospitality comes from El Paso churches, with the Roman Catholic Church and Annunciation House leading the way. Some asylum seekers receive legal assistance from organizations like the Las Americas Immigrant Advocacy Center, the second stop on the pilgrims’ journey.

There, Christina Garcia, who provides legal consultation, explained the complexity of family reunification (which can take 20 or 30 years depending on U.S. quotas and the country of origin) and the difficulty in winning asylum cases. Her agency, she said, won six asylum cases in six years and, in a major victory, seven in 2018.

The current crisis, she said, “is dehumanizing in every aspect and ignores the humanitarian right to access.” She also said El Paso, Atlanta, and the state of Arizona are the most difficult places to gain asylum, and in El Paso, as in the rest of the United States, immigration judges can make arbitrary determinations case by case.

From there, the pilgrims went to St. Christopher’s Church, one of five El Paso Episcopal churches and the one closest to the border, led by the Rev. J.J. Bernal. The Rev. Paul Moore, who chairs the Rio Grande Diocese’s Borderland Ministries, gave an overview of the current situation as it relates to Central America, talking about the failure of trickle-down economics, U.S. foreign policy as it has historically related to Central America, deportation of gang members, security issues across the Northern Triangle, drug cartels, associated violence and the United States’ appetite for drugs.

Across Central America’s Northern Triangle, a region that includes El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, more than 700,000 people have been displaced by violence. However, forced displacement is a global phenomenon now affecting record 68.5 million people worldwide.

On December 14, the pilgrims departed for Ciudad Juárez, some crossing by car and others using pedestrian access along two of the three bridges connecting the two cities. In Juárez, the Rev. Hector Trejo, who arrived six months ago from Chihuahua, the capital of the state of Chihuahua, took them by bus to two of his three Anglican parishes.

San José, or St. Joseph’s, is located along the border in Rancho Anapra, an impoverished settlement on the city’s northwest side, previously a cattle ranching area that squatters settled and that drug cartels have infiltrated

“Because the people here don’t have property rights it became a place for the criminal element,” said Trejo. “There are safe houses, and it’s a movement center for drug traffickers and people smuggler

“The challenge here is great,” he added, saying community members ask him for advice on how to get over the wall because they fear for their lives.

Unlike the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Diocese of Northern Mexico doesn’t have an established ministry serving migrants; it was one thing the Episcopalians hoped to get involved in and something Trejo addressed. The reality is that volunteers need to be trained properly to deal with people who’ve been traveling for weeks and sometimes months, people who haven’t bathed or brushed their teeth in a long time, and who have fled traumatic, violent, abusive situations and encountered the same along their journey. Still, he’s looking for partners in ministry and to build a network of responders along the border.

It was something Bernal, the rector of St. Christopher’s in El Paso, echoed. The Episcopal Church, he said, needs to articulate and establish a vision for its ministry at the border.

“The Episcopal Church is a voice for the voiceless,” he said. “Those of us here at the border feel isolated. We need more active voices and human resources.”

Through its Borderland Ministries, the Rio Grande diocese aims to expand its ministry, said Moore.

And that, he said, must take the form of grassroots ministry led by those on the ground through partnerships based in mutual respect, not patriarchy.

On the last day of the December 13-15 pilgrimage, two carloads of pilgrims departed for Tornillo, Texas, the site of a camp that opened to house 360 unaccompanied minors and housed 2,700 at this writing. They didn’t quite reach the camp, as Border Patrol agents told them it is private property, but they got as close as possible and gathered at a fence to pray for the children in custody there: for their safety, their grieved parents and their futures. (The camp has now been dismantled.)

“I’m really glad we went to the camp — I won’t call it a shelter, it’s not a shelter — it’s a concentration camp for children,” said the Rev. Stephen Carlsen, dean and rector of Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis. “I felt I needed to witness what is being done in our names as Americans.

“I can’t imagine what it would be like if the U.S. border is your last hope ... how people are [mis]treated and dehumanized,” Carlsen said. “If this is their last hope, what must they be fleeing?

After returning to their homes and churches, and to the remaining days of Advent and the coming of Christmas, the members of Gary’s colleague group continued to ponder what they’d seen and how best to respond. One of the clear messages from the experience was that places like Annunciation House need volunteers. But they don’t need people to come for a week or two; they need people who can stay for three months or more, according to Ruben Garcia. And as Padre Trejo pointed out, this work requires preparation and training. One idea that Gary presented to the group is to pool resources to rent a house in El Paso where volunteers can live during their stays, and find a resident coordinator to serve as host and caretaker. Watch the **Spirit**, **eSpirit**, and future editions of **Seasons of the Spirit** for progress reports and to learn how you can be involved. ✚

From an Episcopal News Service report by Lynette Wilson with additional reporting by Sarah Bartenstein.

THINGS TO KNOW

- Gary Jones posted several reflections on his blog before and during the trip, December 12, 13, and 14, 2018: ststephensRVA.org/rectorsblog
- Gary spoke about it during the Sunday Forum on December 16: ststephensRVA.org/forumaudio
- Episcopal Migration Ministries has information and resources about immigration and the current crisis: <https://episcopalmigrationministries.org>



The group of Episcopal clergy and lay people on the Advent pilgrimage in Ciudad Juárez gather on the Mexican side of the border wall.



Richard Rumble

Richmond Hill

Living with intention

Intentional community: a planned residential community that holds a common social, religious, or spiritual vision and works together to uphold their purpose within the broader society

Intentional communities have guided my ministry since before I went to seminary. When I was teaching yoga and discerning a call to the priesthood, I regularly visited an ashram in Buckingham, Virginia, where monastics live in community and practice daily meditation, prayer, teaching, and service from the perspective of spiritual unity. The interfaith shrine at the ashram celebrates the unity behind the diversity of world religions. It is a welcoming community dedicated to interfaith dialogue and spiritual well-being, grounded in contemplative practices. Each morning, breakfast is offered in silence, and members of the community lead meditation sessions throughout the day in the shrine.



By Becky McDaniel

When I arrived at seminary in Sewanee, Tennessee, which is also a kind of intentional community of residential students and their families, I found that I missed the periods of silence and meditation that had been present in the ashram, so I sought out the sisters of the community of St. Mary, a convent located just a few miles from the seminary. I developed a strong relationship with the sisters and the community they served and received permission to complete my field education at the convent rather than a traditional parish church. It was a profound learning experience of living the daily Benedictine monastic rhythms and caring for creation through their Organic Prayer Program that partners with the Rev. Becca Stevens' Thistle Arms organization. Believing that my ministry in the church is very much linked to building relationships with intentional communities, I also served a summer internship with the Charis Community in Charlottesville, an intentional community of young adults who have dedicated themselves to stewardship of the land through permaculture practices as well as social justice work in the Charlottesville area.

I am particularly excited that our summer in-town mission trip will include lodging at another intentional community where I have stayed, Richmond Hill, whose mission is "to seek God's healing of Metropolitan Richmond through prayer, hospitality, racial reconciliation and spiritual development." In addition to a daily monastic rhythm of worship and prayer, Richmond Hill offers several leadership training programs, including the Koinonia School. This program was created to make space for people of all races and backgrounds to engage in safe conversations about difficult topics pertaining to race and justice. The school's programs provide an opportunity to explore how faith and values connect with the work of racial reconciliation. This summer, rising 10th through 12th graders will have the opportunity to live the monastic rhythm of Richmond Hill, praying together each morning and evening, engaging in important conversations about race and justice, and practicing silence at designated times. (Eighth and ninth graders can participate, as well, though they will not be resident at Richmond Hill.)

Perhaps my most meaningful experience at Richmond Hill was on the morning of my departure after staying for a grief support retreat. The center asks that before retreatants leave, we remove the linens from our bed and replace them with a clean set. But before re-making the bed, we are asked to pray for the next person who will sleep there. (This practice is also encouraged for guests at the Society of St. John the Evangelist in Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ghost Ranch in New Mexico, and others.) What a beautiful gesture, to stop and pray for a stranger, asking that God's peace be upon them in this place, a place soaked in prayer and dedicated to the healing of our city. ❀

Angels, art and a cappella

St. Stephen's plans an extraordinary evening to support our outreach ministries this spring. This benefit includes a party, a silent art auction, opportunities to support specific outreach projects in Richmond and beyond, and a concert by two award-winning a cappella groups from the University of Virginia, the Silhouette and the Academical Village People.

The party will feature heavy hors d'oeuvres with a South American flair, beer, Argentinian wine, as well as non-alcoholic beverages. This portion of the evening, which includes the silent art auction, will be held in the parish house; the concert will follow in the church.

Tickets for this exciting event are available in the church office and online at ststephensRVA.org/tickets. Sponsorship opportunities are available, as well.

We'll need volunteers to assist on the day of the event. For more information, please contact Deb Lawrence, dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org.

ANGELS, ART AND A CAPPELLA: A BENEFIT FOR OUTREACH

Friday, April 26, 2019 // 6 p.m. (party), 7:30 p.m. (concert)

Tickets

Party, food, beverages and concert: \$50 per person

Concert only: \$25 per person

Sponsorship packages will include tickets

Getting acquainted (or re-acquainted) with the Episcopal Church

Bishop's visit is May 19

Three times a year, St. Stephen's offers an Inquirers Class for those who want to learn more about the Episcopal way of being a Christian. Some who take this class are brand new to the Episcopal tradition, while others are lifelong Episcopalians seeking a refresher. If you are an adult and thinking about being confirmed or received in the Episcopal Church when the Rt. Rev. Susan Goff, our bishop, visits St. Stephen's on May 19, this class is your preparation. Even if you decide not to be confirmed, you'll find this class fascinating.

The spring class meets on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m., April 3 through May 15 (no meeting on May 1). Gary Jones teaches the class, which covers such things as Anglican spirituality and traditions, worship, the Book of Common Prayer, creeds, and just the basics of faith and what it means to be a Christian. The final class session consists of an engaging tour of the church and a hands-on exploration of the "symphony of symbols" found in our worship, led by Gary.

This informal and informative class includes plenty of time for your questions. Episcopalians believe that dealing with our real questions is an important part of arriving at a real faith. All are welcome in this course on the basics of Christianity and the richness of the Anglican/Episcopal tradition. Please sign up by contacting Janet Allen at 804.288.2867 or jallen@ststephensRVA.org. ❀

Who is my neighbor?

Vacation Bible School emphasizes 'learning to love like Jesus'

Children age 3 through grade 3 are invited to take part in a week of songs, games, projects and worship designed to help them consider, "Who is my neighbor?" That's the theme for this year's Vacation Bible School. From Monday, July 8, through Friday, July 12, children will "learn to love like Jesus," how to be a neighbor to those around us, love our neighbors as Jesus loves us, and live our faith in community. Activities are designed to teach compassion and love for our neighbors—and everyone is our neighbor! Each day a different Bible story will focus attention on how to live God's message of love and be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.



By Sarah-Keel Crews

The success of Vacation Bible School is made possible by dedicated volunteers. We're thrilled that Mary Douglas Rice and Nada Golden will serve as co-chairs this year. Parents and youth in grades 6-12 are invited to serve as classroom volunteers. Contact me at skcrews@ststephensRVA.org.

Andy Russell will lead related programming for fourth and fifth graders; this offering will need volunteer help as well.

Registration for all ages is now open at ststephensRVA.org/VBS. ❀

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2019

- July 8-12, 2019 // 8:45 a.m.-12:15 p.m. each day
- Children age 3 (must be potty-trained)–grade 3; special program for grades 4/5
- Cost: \$50 for one child, \$25 for each additional child; \$100 cap per family



Sarah Bartenstein

In an atrium, the sacred space in which Catechesis of the Good Shepherd takes place, the adult catechist's role is to wonder with the child. Many activities are initiated by the child in a space that is designed for the very young.

Let me show you around

One Sunday morning, at the reception and coffee hour following church, one of St. Stephen's priests introduced a visitor to us; this guest was visiting Episcopal churches and doing research on how liturgy is taught. When I heard this I wanted to go up to him and invite him upstairs to see the atria, the specially-prepared spaces where children ages 3 to 9 work in response to their learning about worship, about the life of the church, and about Jesus the Good Shepherd. I was thinking of all of the amazing presentations I could show him and was keen to tell him stories of how the children respond to different aspects of the work. Despite my enthusiasm to share my love of Catechesis of the Good Shepherd—a Montessori-based approach to the spiritual formation of children—my introverted nature kept me from making the bold invitation.



By Sarah Moyer-Thacker

I do wish I had been given a chance to show him around.

In the fall of 2015 I participated in the inquirers class—an offering for any adult who wishes to be confirmed or received into the church and a class even long-time Episcopalians love—and I learned so much and felt a deep connection to the priest who led the course and to the people who were in my group. I read all of the books and some extras I found listed on the St. Stephen's Web site that were used in past years, but I did not truly start to understand how liturgy was so beautifully rooted in the life of Jesus until I took the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Level I formation course. Since then, layers continually unfold for me as we cycle through the liturgical calendar. In the atria we have a wooden model of this calendar with colored blocks that can be removed and returned to the circular ring. We wonder with the children, "What do we notice about this calendar and how is it different from the calendar that may hang on our refrigerator at home?" The children always notice that our liturgical calendar does not have pages to tear off; it is round, like God's time, and there is no beginning or end. This is deep stuff and we might sit silently and ponder that. But we often also express our joy through singing a favorite Catechesis song that names the liturgical colors and what they represent. "Purple's for preparation, white is for celebration, green is for the growing time, red is for Pentecost!" And this is just one presentation that is intricately linked to all of the other work that the children do.

As catechists we get to experience the many different aspects of church firsthand. In any given Sunday there will be children setting the model altar, preparing the cruets, changing the colors of the chasubles, arranging flowers for the prayer table, and reading Scripture.

Our summer formation course is sometimes called "training" but I finally caught on after I heard our leader Anna Hurdle repeatedly refer to it as religious formation for adults. It may be seen as preparation for working with children in the atria, but it is so much more. It is an invitation to think more about the mystery of our faith and to learn more about the ways that we celebrate this mystery.

I didn't get to show that one visitor around, but St. Stephen's is showing many, week after week, how the love of the Good Shepherd enfolds us all. ❀



(Left) Blocks in a circle show the cycle of the church year and are painted with the colors we associate with each season. (Below) A child in the atrium explores at his own initiative and pace. Photos by Sarah Bartenstein



EXPLORE THIS VOCATION

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd training—or religious formation for adults—is offered every year at St. Stephen's with Anna Hurdle, one of the finest Catechesis of the Good Shepherd leaders in the country. People from other churches, other cities, even other states, to take part in training here. Registration is open now, and tuition is waived for St. Stephen's parishioners. Child care is available during the training if arranged in advance.

Dates

Level I // July 29-August 2, 2019
Level II // August 5-9, 2019

Read more: ststephensRVA.org/levelone and ststephensRVA.org/leveltwo.

Sunday morning group is for those on the parenthood path

There are many opportunities for fellowship and learning at St. Stephen's, and we are truly blessed to have such a thriving community. On Sunday mornings at 10:10, while many adults are attending the Sunday Forum and children and youth are in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Sunday school, a dedicated group of parents is gathered in Room 14 for an offering titled "Many Parents, One Vine." This group focuses on the challenges of parenting in a rapidly changing world. This year the group has discussed books by Jean Twenge, Barbara Brown Taylor, and Pico Iyer, also taking time to share personal stories and seek and offer support.

Many Parents, One Vine is a response to the desire by many parents to meet other parents for conversation and reflection on their lives from a spiritual perspective, as well as make new friends or share some collective wisdom on the joys and challenges of being a parent. The group provides a space to grow in faith and connect with other parents in mutual affirmation. Raising children should be a cooperative, not competitive, enterprise. As the name suggests, we are all connected to one vine, and this allows us to be stronger parents.

Parents who participate in this group find it helpful

"As fairly new members of St. Stephen's Church," says Jean Hershey, "my husband and I were excited



Sarah Bartenstein

Parents in 'Many Parents, One Vine' share the joys and challenges of their calling as parents.

to learn about Many Parents, One Vine as we were looking for more community within a church home. I am pleased to say that our Sunday mornings have been enriched by this warm and inclusive group of parents. Each Sunday, this fluid group openly discusses our shared joys and challenges of parenting through a Christian lens. I always find myself with renewed energy and a positive outlook following our discussions—ready to jump back into the very busy lives of our three children!"

Tim Thurber says, "Many Parents, One Vine has provided rich and stimulating conversations about faith and parenting. It has been a wonderful place of fellowship and support with others facing similar challenges of raising children."

No registration is needed for this offering. Just come to Room 14 upstairs in the parish house at 10:10 a.m. on Sundays whenever you can. If you don't have time to do all (or any!) of the reading, come anyway! ♣

Caring for creation through contemplative practices

Parish retreat at Shrine Mont to consider God's creation in a cherished setting

By Becky McDaniel

God calls us to be good shepherds of creation, to be the image of God's love to all God has made, to reveal Jesus to a suffering world . . . because we are in a relationship with creation, we must assure ourselves that the relationship is whole.
Robert Gottfried and Frederick Krueger, *Living in an Icon*

This year's parish retreat at Shrine Mont will be centered on creation care and contemplative practices based on the work of Robert Gottfried, director of the Center for Religion and Environment at the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, and Frederick Krueger, executive director of the Orthodox Fellowship of the Transfiguration. Their forthcoming book, *Living in an Icon: Alive in the World*, provides a program of spiritual practices designed to reconnect people to the sacredness of God's presence in the material world. Its subtitle also hints at its purpose: "A Twenty-First Century Field Guide to Spiritual Growth."

Shrine Mont is a particularly appropriate place to engage in this reflection, with its cherished natural setting which many consider a "thin place," where the separation between the earth and the divine is especially permeable.

Drawing on the teachings of classic theologians such as St. Bonaventure and St. John Damascene as well as the writings of Esther de Waal, Thomas Merton, and Rachel Carson, Gottfried and Krueger present exercises in reorientation and discernment in nature to develop a life of prayer with the Earth. The spiritual exercises lead to a deeper connection with creation and engender qualities of the Spirit such as gratitude, joy, and humility. *Living in an Icon* is a journey through spiritual ecology, poetry, and practice, and Shrine Mont provides the perfect environment for reorienting towards the presence of God in the natural world.

Throughout the weekend retreat, we will explore contemplative practices both as a group and in solitude, aligning ourselves with the traditional Benedictine rhythm of taking time for prayer and fellowship and making time for personal practice and reflection. As always, we will enjoy campfires, Complines, children's programs and games, quiet time, and Sunday Eucharist at the Cathedral Shrine of the Transfiguration. The weekend will offer fun, rest, and spiritual nourishment. ♣



Briget Ganske

A photo of the entire group on the porch of the Virginia House at Shrine Mont is one of the weekend's traditions.

THINGS TO KNOW

- The retreat takes place June 21-23, 2019, beginning with supper Friday evening.
- Costs include room, meals, and all activities; an early-bird discount is available through March 20. (\$175 per person, double occupancy; \$220 per person, single occupancy if available; \$77 per person ages 3 through 12; no charge for children age 3 and under).
- Transportation is on your own; if you'd like to carpool, staff may be able to help you connect with a ride.
- The retreat is for all ages. Everyone is welcome: individuals, couples, families; people who've never been to Shrine Mont and people who have gone there for years.
- You may participate in as many activities as you choose.
- There will be time on your own for rest, relaxation, hiking, swimming, porch rocking.
- Delicious meals are served family style.
- Additional details, costs and registration are at ststephensRVA.org/shrinemont and in brochures at a Shrine Mont display near Palmer Hall in the parish house.
- Questions: Sarah-Keel Crews, 804.288.2867, skcrews@ststephensRVA.org.

WHAT IS SHRINE MONT?

Shrine Mont is a camp and conference center of the Diocese of Virginia. It is located in the mountains roughly an hour northwest of Harrisonburg. Accommodations are comfortable but rustic—no air conditioning or televisions and very spotty cell service! Shrine Mont is also the home of the cathedral of the diocese—the Cathedral Shrine of the Transfiguration, an open air, hand-built stone structure. Family-style meals are plentiful and delicious.

It's true: less is more!

When I was a visiting professor at Lynchburg College, I taught a survey course on modern and contemporary poetry. My students had purchased one of those massive anthologies so heavy one could use it for a doorstop, thick as a Bible. I encouraged them all to return these (very expensive!) textbooks and decided that rather than see how many poems we could get through in a semester, how many literary movements over how many decades, we would instead read and discuss one poem per class period.



By Allison Seay

My students laughed. “The e is *no way* we can spend a whole hour on a single sonnet,” they said. “Watch and see,” I countered. “I bet we can.”

And we did.

I think it was one of my better decisions in 12 years of teaching: a counter-cultural approach to study; the deep dive; the long exposure. The more intently we looked at an Emily Dickinson poem, for example, the more mysterious it became. And just when we thought we’d said all we could say, asked all we could ask, a new corner would appear that invited us around it so that at the end of the hour we had seemingly gotten nowhere, no closer to any conclusion than when we had first begun

And yet, somehow, we had indeed moved closer to *something*. Or we had ourselves been moved. I have come to think of it this way: rather than look at the water from shore each day, we got all the way in it ourselves. We did not look *at* the poem; we looked *inside* it.

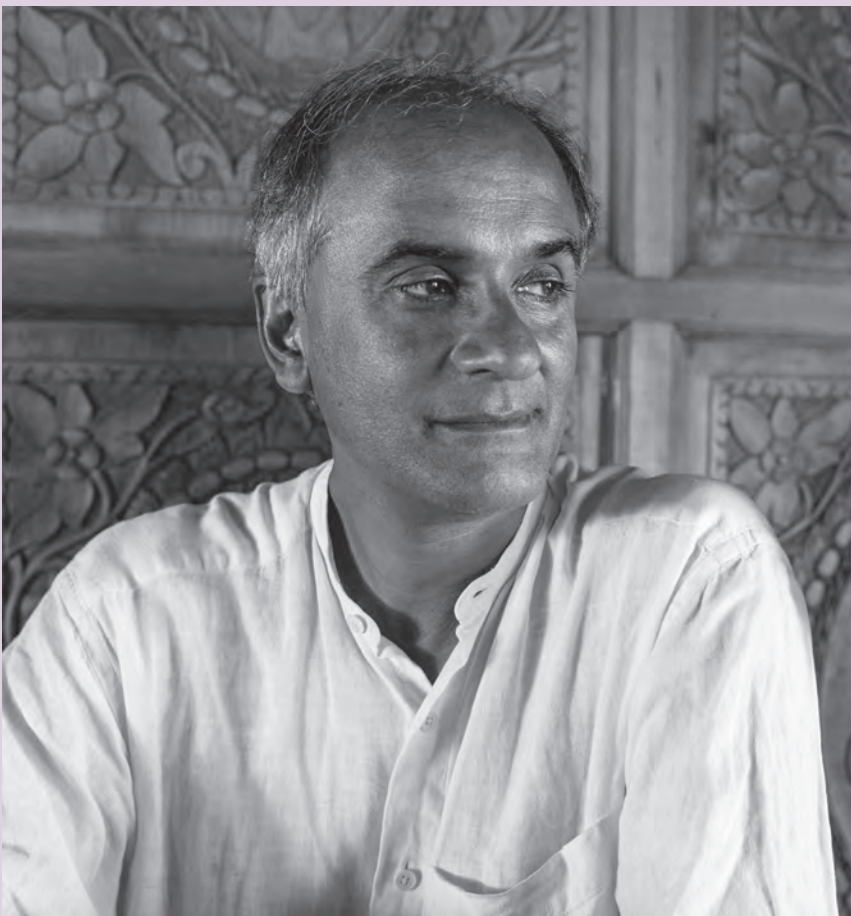
I have learned that this kind of reward is available more often than we might realize—the deeper we go, the longer we’re there, the greater the riches we find (These days I find those riches in my work as a catechist, wondering alongside the children as they ponder the mysteries of God, watching them pour water into wine or add leaven to flour. They do a lot of watching, a lot of thinking. Nothing gets “done” exactly, but a whole lot happens.)

It is in this vein of honoring the deeper dive, the patient gaze, that I continue my work at St. Stephen’s as associate for religion and the arts, understanding my role to be one that attempts to find ways to bridge those worlds so that we are more aware of the beauty of each and more attuned to the essential sameness of them. Their marriage, in my experience, has widened a door to the divine.

Rather than look at the water from shore each day, we got all the way in it ourselves. We did not look *at* the poem; we looked *inside* it.

A specific task I’m excited about is to facilitate, with the Rev. Claudia Merritt, a three-part Lenten discussion group with those who have read a small but profound book, *The Art of Stillness*, by Pico Iyer, a writer St. Stephen’s is honored to host on March 28 at 7 p.m.

When Claudia and I first talked about leading a group like this, an initial thought I had was that there would be no way to get three sessions out of such a short book. (It is but 66 pages.) But then I realized that was exactly why we should use it; we would be practicing the very things the book argues we should value the most: slowness, stillness, nowhere-ness. We would be doing the *not*-doing, resisting the idea that we ought to be moving faster, reading more.



Brigitte Lacombe

PICO IYER: The Stillness We Ache For

Thursday, March 28, at 7 p.m. at St. Stephen’s

At a time of round-the-clock news, beeping phones and escalating stress, it can be harder than ever to remember what we care for and what really matters. Drawing on his time in monasteries Eastern and Western, calling upon his 44 years of talks with the XIVth Dalai Lama, and trying to maintain his sanity in an age of acceleration and distraction, journalist and essayist Pico Iyer shares practical tips and suggestions for how to make a life as well as a living in a world of clutter and confusion.

Tickets are available in the parish office and at ststephensRVA.org/iyer. The suggested donation is \$25

PICO IYER DISCUSSION GROUP

Mondays, Monday, March 11, March 18 and April 1
Led by Claudia Merritt and Allison Seay

Two sessions will take place before Iyer’s visit; the third is scheduled after it so that we may reflect on his presentation. Be sure to register immediately if you have not already done so! All participants are expected to read in full *The Art of Stillness* (66 pages long) prior to the first session, and commit to attending all three sessions. Contact Allison, aseay@ststephensRVA.org, or Claudia, cmerritt@ststephensRVA.org, to sign up for the group. Space is limited.

Pico Iyer’s books are available in the bookshop and his newest, *About Autumn Light*, is slated for publication this April.

In this season of Lent—which includes for many an extended meditation on mortality, impermanence, grief, sacrifice—a commitment to *doing* less but thinking more feels like an especially valuable practice. As Iyer himself explains, “In an age of speed...nothing could be more invigorating than going slow. In an age of distraction, nothing could feel more luxurious than paying attention. And in an age of constant movement, nothing is more urgent than sitting still.” ❀



A rich season

We may think of the penitential season of Lent in terms of self-denial, doing without, refraining from saying “Alleluia.” That does ’t mean, however, that it cannot be a very rich time. Lent offers opportunities for focusing or paying attention to things that we may neglect or forget at other times. At St. Stephen’s Church, we offer a number of ways for you to tap into the richness of Lent, from worship to special reading to instruction on spiritual practices like fasting. In addition, we usually offer at least one Lenten retreat or workshop. This year, we will have a Friday evening talk and a Saturday workshop led by Br. David Vryhof of the Society of St. John the Evangelist to begin the season; and just before Holy Week, Professor Kayleen Asbo will be here to help us explore the *Divine Comedy* and understand its resonance in our 21st century lives.

BR. DAVID VRYHOF, SSJE

Br. David will give a talk Friday evening, March 8, titled, “Listening to God.” We’ll begin with a simple supper (donation based) in the Fellowship Hall, and continue with a 30- to 45-minute teaching.

He will lead a workshop the next day, Saturday, March 9, from 9 a.m. until noon, on “The Gift of Humility.” Humility is not a much-sought-after virtue today, but monastics in every age have seen it as the chief virtue of the Christian life and the single most important goal of monastic life. In this half-day workshop, we’ll explore why they have valued it so highly, how they have recognized it, and how they have sought to develop it. We’ll also look at humility as Christ taught and lived it, and as the early Church practiced it.

In the Sunday Forum on March 10, Br. David will discuss Jesus in the Gospel of John.

KAYLEEN ASBO, PH.D.

Dante: A Journey to Hope and Healing

How do we hold on to hope when everything around us is falling apart? How can we face the difficult task of rebuilding shattered lives in the midst of persistent darkness? How do we find our way out of despair into healing and community? How do we turn towards the difficult tasks of personal and collective transformation with integrity? How do we discover a place of belonging and joy?



Br. David



Dr. Asbo

Dante’s *Divine Comedy* is a 700-year-old road map to answering those deep, persistent questions. While it’s been called the most beautiful poem ever written, it is much more: a penetrating synthesis of imagination that weaves together Greek and Roman myth, European history, and a pathway of universal spiritual development with deep cross-cultural resonance. Written during the “dark woods” of Dante’s midlife after a series of personal catastrophes, it is an epic achievement that saved the author’s own life.

In this retreat set to begin our commemoration of Holy Week, participants will dive into this tale through art, poetry and myth, woven together with contemplative practices to awaken your own imagination so that you can discover how Dante’s story can lead to your own renewal and transformation.

Dr. Asbo is a passionate scholar of history, myth, music, art and comparative religion. Educated at Smith College, Mills College, the San Francisco Conservatory, Pacifica Graduate Institute and the University of California, Dr. Asbo holds a Ph.D. in mythology and additional master’s degrees in depth psychology and piano performance. She is a faculty member of the Pacifica Graduate Institute and a lecturer for the Osher Life Long Learning Institutes at UC Berkeley, Sonoma State University and Dominican University in California.

Retreat schedule and registration: The retreat begins Friday evening, April 12, from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m., and continues Saturday, April 13, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. The suggested donation is \$45, payable with your registration. Dinner will be served on Friday and lunch on Saturday; you will be invited to make a donation at each meal. To register, visit ststephensRVA.org/lent-resources, or stop by or call the parish office.

Special opportunity: Dr. Asbo has made her online course “Twenty-two Days of Mary Magdalene” available to St. Stephen’s parishioners for half-price, to allow you to experience her teaching before she comes here for her in-person workshop. To subscribe, visit our Web site at ststephensRVA.org/lent-resources and scroll down the page to the section about Kayleen Asbo; you will find a special link there to the St. Stephen’s subscription. The daily series begins March 6. ❀

At St. Stephen’s Church, we offer a number of ways for you to tap into the richness of Lent, from worship to special reading to instruction on spiritual practices like fasting. In addition, we usually offer at least one Lenten retreat or workshop. This year, we have two.

For the journey

In addition to the retreats and other offerings described in this edition of Seasons of the Spirit, consider the following resources for your Lenten journey.

The bookshop @ St. Stephen’s offers prayer books, Bibles, theological classics, devotional books and more. It is open during office hours (Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.) and on Sunday mornings.

Forward Movement: copies of *Forward Day by Day* (small booklets of daily devotions based on the lectionary) are available for purchase in the parish office for \$1 each; large print editions are also available. A selection of Forward Movement books and booklets is also available.

Monastic wisdom: last year the Society of St. John the Evangelist published prayer journals (free downloadable PDFs) and other materials related to the theme, “Meeting Jesus in the Gospel of John.” The brothers continue to offer this and other curricula for individual or group use. Visit ssje.org or ststephensRVA.org/lent-resources.

Practices: Lent is an appropriate time to take on a new practice such as regularly attending weekday Morning Prayer (8:10 a.m.), Evensong (5:30 p.m.), and/or the sung Compline service on Sundays at 8 p.m. You might also try attending a contemplative prayer offering such as the Tuesday morning group in the Lounge (8:45 a.m.) or the monthly Second Saturdays Centering Prayer session in Room 14 (9 a.m.-11 a.m.). You might consider a regular practice of meditation, mindfulness, or yoga. (Visit ststephensRVA.org/wellness.)

Wednesday Preaching Series: St. Paul’s Episcopal Church across from Capitol Square has held a well-known preaching series since 1897. Beginning this year, the series takes place one day per week, Wednesdays. Services begin at noon, and lunch is served before and after each Wednesday service. You can read more about this series at stpaulsrva.org, or pick up a brochure at Information Central. This year’s preachers include the Rev. Jeanne Pupke, Imam Ammar Amonette, the Rev. John Kinney, Rabbi Michael Knopf, and the Rev. Andrew Terry. ❀

A middle way

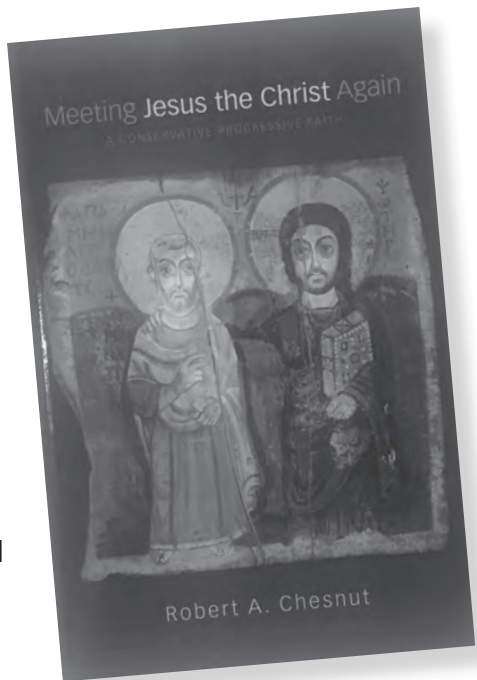
In an era of intense polarization, join a Lenten journey to explore a faithful “middle way” for Christians who lean toward the right on the political spectrum, and those who lean toward the left. The Rev. Robert Chesnut, a Presbyterian pastor, educator, and the author of *Meeting Jesus the Christ Again: A Conservative Progressive Faith*, will guide an exploration of such questions as: Did the historical Jesus really claim divine messiahship? What are the political implications of his teachings? Is the notion of original sin hopelessly antiquated? If the traditional doctrine of “substitutionary atonement” is invalid (as John Phillip Newell and others assert), can we still make any sense of the cross as redemptive? Is belief in an afterlife optional for Christians?

This series will be offered on five Sunday evenings for one hour beginning March 3. We’ll gather in the Small Fellowship Hall at 6:45 p.m. Pick up your meal at the Sunday Community Supper; Dr. Chesnut will offer an introduction to the week’s material, after which there will be plenty of time for questions and discussion. Copies of his book, an outline of the course, and questions for discussion are available in the church office.

No sign-up is required for this free offering, but participants are encouraged to read the book in advance of the first session. If you have questions, please contact Penny Nash, pnash@ststephensRVA.org or 804.288.2867. ❀



Robert Chesnut



Services for Holy Week and Easter



HOLY WEEK SERVICES *All services take place in the main church, except Stations of the Cross, which takes place outdoors (weather permitting).*

Monday through Friday

8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer and Communion
5:30 p.m., Evensong (except Thursday and Friday in Holy Week)

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday, April 14

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note earlier-than-usual time)
9:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two*
All gather at the Th ee Chopt entrance to the church for the Blessing of the Palms before processing to separate services in Palmer Hall and in the church.
10:10 a.m. Sunday school, Sunday Forum (with Kayleen Asbo)
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two*
5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion*
6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper in Large Fellowship Hall
8:00 p.m., Compline

Maundy Thursda , April 18: The nstitution of the Lord’s Supper

7:30 p.m., Holy Eucharist and Stripping of the Altar followed by all-night vigil

Good Friday, April 19: The rucifixion of ur Lord

8:10 a.m., Morning Prayer and Communion from the reserved sacrament
Noon, Liturgy for Good Friday
5:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross



Doug Buerlein

‘Could you not stay awake with me one hour?’

Maundy Thursday Vigil

On Maundy Thursday (pril 18 this year), we remember Jesus’ commandment to his disciples, “Love one another.” It is the day we remember the institution of the Lord’s Supper before his betrayal, passion and death. At 7:30 p.m. on Maundy Thursda , there will be a service of Holy Eucharist, followed by the Stripping of the Altar and Procession to the Altar of Repose. This se vice is one of the most deeply moving liturgies of the entire year. An all-night vigil follows in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit, and you are invited to take part for an hour, anytime between 9 p.m. and 8 a.m.



Sarah Bartenstein

(Above) Stations of the Cross, led by St. Stephen’s youth, takes place on Good Friday. Much of the service is held outdoors, weather permitting. (Left) The crucifixion window in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

EASTER SERVICES

Holy Saturday, April 20

7:30 p.m., Holy Baptism and the Great Vigil of Easter

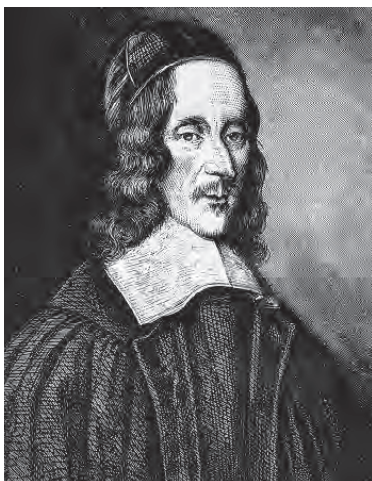
Easter Day, Sunday, April 21: The esurrection of Our Lord

7:30 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite One (note earlier-than-usual time)
9:00 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, followed by reception (two services, one in the church, one in Palmer Hall)*
No education hour on Easter Day
11:15 a.m., Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, followed by reception*
5:30 p.m., Celtic Evensong and Communion*
6:30 p.m., Sunday Community Supper in Large Fellowship Hall
8:00 p.m., Compline

Asterisk (*) indicates child care will be available for ages 4 and under. ❀



John Donne



George Herbert



Sir Thomas Browne

Let's get metaphysical

John Donne, George Herbert, and Sir Thomas Browne were three of the most important and influential Anglican writers of the Renaissance. Their work, coined “metaphysical,” is characterized by intellectual ingenuity and inventiveness and an insistence on the complete, transformative union of head and heart, of knowing and mystery.

John Donne, poet, essayist, preacher, and eventually dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, is generally credited with establishing the metaphysical style. If you know the phrase “no man is an island,” then you already know one thing by Donne. George Herbert, also a poet, essayist, and Anglican priest, wrote *The Temple*, a volume of poems that another famous Anglican poet, T. S. Eliot, called “a record of the spiritual struggles of a man of intellectual power and emotional intensity.” (If you've sung the hymn “Come, my Way, my Truth, my Life,” you've sung a poem by Herbert.) Writing about the same time as Herbert, Sir Thomas Browne, neither poet nor priest, but a learned physician who practiced in Norwich, England, is perhaps less well-known than Herbert or Donne, but his work is no less fascinating and powerful in its meditations on faith, love, and the mysteries of life. To study these writers today is to open our minds and souls to the splendors, mysteries, and struggles of a life of faith.

Last year during Lent, Gardner Campbell, associate professor of English at Virginia Commonwealth University, taught a series on John Milton's “Paradise Lost” in the Sunday Forum, riveting his listeners. He follows that fascinating series this Lent with a three-part meditative study of these revered writers, called “A Lenten Reawakening.” Join us at 10:10 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall, **March 17, 24, and 31**. No reservations are needed for the Forum. ❖



Gardner Campbell

Fasting as a Lenten practice



In the Book of Common Prayer, the liturgy for Ash Wednesday calls us to observe a holy Lent “by self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God's holy Word.” Fasting is a doorway to all the other spiritual disciplines. People of faith have practiced fasting for millennia as a way to grow closer to God. It enriches our prayer life, takes us out of ourselves, and opens us up to the Spirit. By refraining from our normal diet, our focus shifts and our awareness heightens. Our connection to one another deepens. Fasting as a means of spiritual growth is a part of all major religious traditions. Jesus himself fasted before he began his ministry and John the Baptist ate nothing but locusts and honey.

There are many ways of fasting. In the past at St. Stephen's, we have supported groups of people undertaking a three-day Lenten fast. This Lent we are taking on a slightly different practice. Rather than one three-day fast, we will pick one day, say a Tuesday, and fast every Tuesday for all six weeks of Lent.

If you would like to explore the practice of fasting, to see if it is something you are being called to do this Lent, please come to an introductory meeting on **Monday, March 4 at 7 p.m.** in the Lounge. If you have questions, please contact Claudia Merritt, cmerritt@st.stephensRVA.org. ❖

Full of grace and power

Envisioning our Future, St. Stephen's process for reviewing our ministries and ensure future vitality, finished the “looking back” phase in December. Parishioners from 24 areas of parish life reflected on each area's unique history through an exercise examining its roots, how it has evolved over time, what changes have affected it, and where we have felt God's call in the work. The reflections from each cohort were heartfelt and beautiful, as captured in the note from one participant that “the mystical body of faith is shared in everything these ministries do.”

Since the founding of St. Stephen's in 1910, the ministries of the church have continued to grow and evolve. At times, ministries were formed in response to clear needs in the community. For example, while St. Stephen's had been giving food to those in need for some time, the formal food pantry was established in response to an increase in food insecurity during the recession. Services in Palmer Hall were begun to meet the needs of the growing number of young families coming to St. Stephen's. At other times, ministries have grown out of the passion of an individual or small group of parishioners who envision sharing God's presence through, for example, a prayer shawl knitting group, a chapter of Daughters of the King, visitors to the Richmond City Jail, or icon writers.

Ministries have adapted well as societal changes came about and as the church grew. The influx of women into the workplace and women's ordination brought about changes in women's ministries in the 1970s, while growing interest in wellness and nutrition catalyzed the formation of the farmers market and wellness ministries. Many groups spoke about the impact of technology, at times from a positive perspective such as how St. Stephen's is in many ways a global congregation via electronic communities or how the contemplative practices at St. Stephen's meet a deep longing for stillness and quiet. Others noted the challenges of technology such as their addictive nature, their impact on children, or the way they can lower our sense of connection.

Throughout the summaries provided by ministry liaisons, one gets a sense of the resilience of the ministries and how the most difficult of circumstances can lead to new beginnings. One moving example of this is how our partnerships in the East End grew out of the shooting death of Jamie Knight, son of David and Jeannie Knight, and the healing work of the church in its aftermath. (David was then associate rector, and both Jamie and Jeannie taught in St. Stephen's Preschool.) The realization that this violence, while unusual for the St. Stephen's community, was happening with tragic regularity in the East End, led to new awareness and a commitment to know

our neighbors more deeply, to learn from them, and to do what we could to address issues that affect them



By Susan Wilkes

people can come together as a community even if they are not “members” in the traditional sense.

Perhaps the most moving aspect of the groups' collective reflection is the clarity with which participants sense God's calling in their work, where they “feel the presence of the holy and experience joy,” as one person put it. Whether it's the parishioner taking fruit to a senior citizen, the healing prayer minister laying hands on a congregant's shoulders, a member of the men's group sharing a deep challenge, or the greeter who looks for God in each new face, all report a sense of their powerful spiritual growth through ministering to others. As one person noted, “The holy Spirit leads us to listen and respect. We receive in our giving.”

Also evident is the depth of participants' dedication to and love for the ministries in which they are involved. One liaison wrote beautifully regarding her tears “at the love and gratitude and enthusiasm from these committee members” towards their work.

May our “love and gratitude and enthusiasm” continue as we envision what lies ahead for our vibrant offerings. May we continue to follow in the way of Stephen, our patron saint, who “full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” (Acts 6:8) ❖

The Envisioning our Future project will continue this spring as ministry areas analyze their current state, including strengths, aspirations for the future, opportunities for improvement, needs in society, and trends. Everyone is welcome to participate. Meeting times will be noted at ststephensRVA.org/future, and in the weekly **eSpirit** emails and printed **Spirit** newsletter.

Marion Chenault to retire as director of St. Stephen’s Preschool

Sarah Bartenstein



Jan Locher (left) will succeed her mentor Marion Chenault (right) as director of St. Stephen's Preschool when Marion retires at the end of the current school year.

In January, Marion Chenault, who has served as director of St. Stephen’s Preschool since 2001, announced her plans to retire at the conclusion of the 2018-19 school year.

“Marion’s love of children and her expertise in their nurture and care are well known,” said the Rev. Gary D. Jones, rector of St. Stephen’s Church. Gary praised Marion’s dedication and gifts to the school, saying, “Although Marion rightly points out that the church’s preschool is great because of its teachers and families, the fact is that Marion is the one who attracted such fabulous teachers and families. Caring for children and helping them to grow up thriving, with joy and wonder, are central to the mission of St. Stephen’s Church, and we are all grateful for Marion’s expert guidance.”

HIGHLY REGARDED EDUCATOR

Marion is highly regarded among early childhood educators, and during her tenure, the preschool received national accreditation.

Prior to joining St. Stephen’s Preschool, Marion was the director of Richmond Child Development Center’s Ellwood House, which she co-founded in 1982.

The Randolph-Macon Woman’s College graduate founded Educational Associates, a tutoring agency, in 1976 and before that, taught middle school science for seven years. Marion and her husband Cabell, who have two adult children and two grandchildren, are active members of St. Stephen’s. Marion volunteers for the church and has served on the boards of other schools in the area.

“Marion possesses a true gift in being able to connect with every child and parent at St. Stephen’s Preschool, past and present,” said Mary Douglas Rice, a parishioner, preschool parent, and co-chair of the parents council. “Remembering names and special circumstances, openly caring that everyone should feel respected, welcomed, and important.

“She has been more than an all-around leader of our preschool,” Mary Douglas added. “She has been a special mentor—someone who has personally given me confidence as a mother, who has encouraged, invited, and nudged me to grow, even as we both watch my daughters grow. I am forever grateful for her warmth and wisdom!”

Vestry member Chip Tompkins, who is the father and grandfather of children who have attended the preschool, said, “We have been truly blessed to have had Marion Chenault at the helm of our preschool. Her expertise in the development of young children and their preparation for elementary school make her a sought-after figure in Richmond and around the state.” Chip, who serves on the school’s advisory board, added, “Her enduring focus on the development of social skills, values, and kindness have made ours a preschool like no other.”

Marion said, “It has been my privilege and my joy to spend the last eighteen and a half years as director of St. Stephen’s Preschool. I have loved my roles as mentor to scores of teachers, sounding board to parents, and teacher to the children who have come to St. Stephen’s Preschool. It is time, however, to change my focus and pass along this wonderful school to new leadership.”

NEW DIRECTOR WAS MENTORED BY MARION

Acting on Marion’s expert advice, the rector called educator and St. Stephen’s parishioner Jan Locher to serve as director beginning with the 2019-20 academic year. Jan, who is employed by Henrico County Public Schools at Mayberry Elementary School, is a former St. Stephen’s Preschool teacher whom Marion mentored. She and her family are also active members of St. Stephen’s Church, where Jan has served as lead catechist in Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, the spiritual formation program St. Stephen’s uses with young children. Jan and her husband Mike’s own children attended the preschool.

“I feel so honored to follow Marion Chenault in this role,” said Jan.

“She is a great leader and has had such an influence in our community. I was fortunate enough to work with her for several years and am excited to re-join St. Stephen’s Preschool. My passion is learning side-by-side with the children I teach. Staying curious and mindful of the present is so important in our daily learning, and children help remind us of this effortlessly.”

A “meet and greet” for Jan will take place on Tuesday, March 19, in the Lounge, 11 a.m. until 1 p.m.

A farewell reception for Marion will take place the evening of May 1 at Wonderful Wednesdays. Additional details will be announced in the **Spirit** and **eSpirit**. ❀

‘Marion possesses a true gift in being able to connect with every child and parent at St. Stephen’s Preschool, past and present,’ said Mary Douglas Rice. ‘Remembering names and special circumstances, openly caring that everyone should feel respected, welcomed, and important.’

Kneelers project in Chapel of the Good Shepherd nearly complete

Following the renovations to our church that were largely completed in 2015, a group of parishioners undertook a project to needlepoint kneelers for new cathedral chairs in the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. That project was completed quickly, and the newly formed needlepoint guild moved next to kneelers in the Chapel of the Good Shepherd.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and generosity of many donors, all of those kneelers have been “spoken for,” and many of them have been completed by their stitchers. This second group of kneelers has been designed by parishioner Jessica Tongel. Each has a red background and a shield with a different symbol such as the scallop shell (a symbol for baptism) in the photograph on this page. Many are inspired by motifs found in our stained glass windows.

When each canvas has been stitched, it is taken to a studio in Alexandria to be blocked and installed on a kneeler. (If you are in the chapel and notice your kneeler is missing, that’s why.)

Many thanks to all those who have made this beautiful ministry possible.

The guild now offers Christmas ornament canvases in the May Fair House, the shop managed by the Women of St. Stephen’s. Each ornament has a symbol from one of the kneelers, such as a daisy, fleur de lis, scallop shell, cross, bee, Noah’s Ark, or other symbol. Proceeds will support future needlepoint projects in our worship spaces. These will make special gifts for a baptism, confirmation, wedding, graduation, Mother’s Day, Christmas, or other occasion, and will be treasured family heirlooms.



Sarah Bartenstein

Stitchers of any skill or experience level are invited to gather Friday mornings in Room 1 (top floor of parish house) for fellowship and conversation while they work. Your project does not need to be for the church nor does it have to be needlepoint. All are welcome. ❀

ARE YOU STITCHING A KNEELER?
If you are stitching one of the kneelers for the Chapel of the Good Shepherd and you are nearly finished, we’d love to include it in the group of canvases that will go to Alexandria in March. Questions? Please contact Robyn Kay, rrkay12gmail.com, or any other member of the needlepoint guild (Marie Carter, Sally Lester, Helen Sarrett, Jessica Tongel).

Thank you to these individuals and families who have made their pledge for 2019

Ned & Jane Abbe · Ben & Lucile Ackerly · Dave & Marion Addison · David & Kara Addison · Ned Addison · John & Mary Frances Aiken · Susan Albert · Al Albiston · Tom & Elizabeth Allen · Litt & Carol Allen · Janet Allen · Kay Alley · Lang & Lisa Ambrose · Mary Anderson · Chris & Carroll Andrews · Jason & Kathryn Angus · Sal Anselmo · Tony Anthony · John & Barbara Apostle · Bill & Ellen Armstrong · Carol Armstrong · Susan Armstrong · James & Sally Ashby · John & Toni Ashworth · Carl & Nancy Atkins · Tappan & Camp August · Margaret Austin · Charley & Sally Ayers · Bob Aylor · Marc & Julia Ayscue · Ginger Bacon · Glenna Bailey · John & Violet Bain · Mabel Baldwin · David & Gussie Bannard · Ben & Mary Barbot · Gene Barham · Robert & Mary Elizabeth Barnes · John & Patsy Barr · Larry & Sarah Bartenstein · Brenda Bartges · George & Laura Baskerville · J. 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Christian Bozorth · Polly Bozorth · Margaret Bradley · Thomas & Maggie Bradshaw · Pat & Tricia Branch · Read & Jody Branch · Caroline Brandt · David & Nancy Breeding · Liz Brengel · Don Brennan & Brooke Davila · Lee & Allison Bridges · Barbara Brierre · Cordell & Ginny Briggs · Jeb & Ibbie Britton · Allen & Sydney Broaddus · Kathy Brock · Joe & Leslie Brockman · Judy Brown · Bill & Suzanne Brown · Hill & Peggy Brown · Rod & Pat Brown · Glennie Brown · Kirk Brown · Orran & Ellen Brown · Paul & Gere Brown · Brian & Beth Brubaker · John & Joan Bruns · Pat Bryant · Mary Brydon · Michaux & Judy Buchanan · Blissie Buford · Wads & Wendy Bugg · Paul & Betsy Bullock · Jeff & Kathleen Burden · John Burgess · Mary Anne Burke · Archer Burke · John & Mimi Burke · Marshall Burke · Henry Burke · Mark & Anne Burnett · Barbara Burrows · Bob & Adrienne Burrus · JB Burtch · Dianne Butler · Bob & Edie Cabaniss · Tim & Chris Call · Gigi Calvert · Michael & Beverly Campbell · J.B. & Lois Campbell · Gardner & Alice Campbell · Jerry & Kristi Canaan · Courtenay Cann · Brian Cann · Jack & Anne Cantile · Marygrace Cantilo · Tom & Sandy Capps · Doug Carleton · Linda Carpenter · Mark & Patty Carpenter · Judy Carpenter Hawthorne · Trace Carson · Hugh & Marie Carter · Mason & Julie Chapman · Sharon Charles · Cabell & Marion Chenault · Caroline Cheney · Evan Chesterman · Bob & Anne Chewning · Tom & Sarah Chiffriller · Nathan & Dawn Childs · Polly Christian · John & Sandra Christian · Dixon & Kate Roy Christian · Billy & Lisa Claiborne · Cole & Macon Clarkson · Richard & Kay Clary · Steve & Joan Clement · Noel & Meg Clinard · Clark Cockrell · Anne Cockrell · Ted & Claire Cole · Ron & Stephanie Coleman · Bob & Jean Collins · Bobby & Barbara Cone · Liz Cone · Jinx Constine · Barbara Cook · Elliott & Gale Cooper · Robert Copeland · Sam & Erin Corey · John & Page Corey · Christopher Corts · Tommy & Claire Cottrell · Jim & Margie Couch · Tom & Carpie Coulbourn · Tom & Sterling Coulbourn · Clark & Amanda Coulbourn · Brian Couturier · Tom Cox & Penny Nash · Beese Craigie · Glenn & Karen Crawford · Spot Crenshaw · Hatcher & Leslie Crenshaw · Beth Crews · Smokie Crews · Sarah-Keel Crews · John Crowder & Mary Bacon · Bland & Lynn Crowder · Chris Crowley · Anne Gordon Curran · Martha Curry · Steven & Barbara Dalle Mura · Jane Daly · Teddy & Lucy Damgard · Christa Daniel · Dan Daniel & Winston Blair · Suzanne Darling · Bob & Judy Daughtry · Mary Meade Davenport · Ken & Ann Davis · Gordon & Virginia Davis · John & Cami Davis · Sam & Susan Davis · Kathryn Davis · Bill & Susan Davis · David Davis & Elizabeth Miksovic · Nate & Meghan Deal · Jason & Shelley Deitz · Michael & Dianne Del Bueno · Mitzi Dempsey · Lou Dent · Brian Dent · Martha Dent · Sam Derieux · Sara Deringer · Bob & Clarice Dibble · Ken & Sherlyn Dibble · Paul & Judy Dickinson · Terry & Lila Dickinson · Preston & Blair Dillard · Luther & Debbie Dixon · Carter Doswell & Jeff ey Jacobs · Bill Douthat · Betsy Downey · Mimi Dozier · James & Catherine Driscoll · Harley & Laurie Duane · Dan & Paula Dukes · Keith & Susan Dull · John & Debbie Dunlap · Mary Catherine Dunn · Wayne & Judith Dunn · Donny & Mary Dunn · B.J. 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New vestry members elected at annual meeting

At the annual parish meeting held Sunday, February 10, attendees elected six women and men to serve three-year terms on the vestry:

Bobby Fauntleroy has been a member of St. Stephen's since 1998. A senior portfolio manager with South State Wealth Management, Bobby has served as the chairman of the annual giving campaign, a member of the preschool advisory board, and as a chalice bearer. He has been a volunteer at Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School and Fairfield County Elementary School, and has taken part in parish trips to the Middle East and the Dominican Republic. He and his wife Betsy have three children.



L.H. Ginn III is a retired U.S. Army Major General, and a veteran of vestry service. He has served as senior warden five times, most recently in 2007-08. He currently serves on the steering committee for the Legacy Society, our planned giving program. He was a founding member of the board of directors for Anna Julia Cooper Episcopal School, and chaired the board of trustees for Church Schools in the Diocese of Virginia from 2002 until 2007. He has been a member of the Memorial Trustees for the Roslyn conference center since 2009 and is its vice chair. L.H., who has been a member of St. Stephen's since 1946, has two adult children.



Alice T. Goodwin has been deeply involved in St. Stephen's outreach ministries, locally, nationally, and internationally. She has traveled to the Dominican Republic and to areas of the United States cleaning up after natural disasters, and she serves on the parish's international outreach committee. She volunteers in the May Fair House, as well. Previously she taught Sunday school, was on a May Fair House cook team, served on the altar guild, co-chaired the outreach committee, and served as a lay Eucharistic visitor. This homemaker and her husband Bill have five grown children. Alice has been a member of St. Stephen's since 1979.



Lynn Ivey, a member of St. Stephen's Church since 1964, is a custom home builder. He is an annual giving campaign caller and the co-leader of an Emmaus Group. He has served on St. Stephen's vestry in the past, including as junior warden and register. Lynn has been very involved in outreach at St. Stephen's, including as a member of the outreach committee and as a volunteer in hurricane relief on the Gulf Coast. He was a key volunteer during the capital campaign renovation. Lynn has two grown children and a grandson.



Allison Koschak currently serves on the steering committee for the "Envisioning Our Future" process. The owner of Law Partner, LLC, a legal placement and consulting service, she has been a eucharistic visitor, a subdeacon and chalice bearer, and an annual giving campaign caller. She has been an active volunteer in such St. Stephen's ministries as the farmers market, East End outreach, CARITAS, the Holiday Memorial Service and on a parish discernment committee (a committee which works with an individual seeking ordination), and has been an Emmaus Group leader. Allison, who has been a member of St. Stephen's since 1990, has served on St. Stephen's vestry once before. Her family includes husband Mike, her three adult stepchildren, and Allison's mother Anne "Mo" Parrish.



Shelley Spalding is an attorney who joined St. Stephen's in 2002. She and her husband Brandon have two children, and the family is active in Palmer Hall, where Shelley is a chalice bearer and an altar guild member. She also teaches Sunday school.



At the newly constituted vestry's first meeting, members elected Koschak as senior warden, Ivey as junior warden, and Fauntleroy as assistant treasurer. They re-elected Braxton Hill as register and Mary Bacon as treasurer.

At the annual meeting on February 10, the rector thanked the outgoing members of the vestry for their service over the past three years: senior warden John Bates, Judy Buchanan, Marie Carter, junior warden Calle Luke, Mac McElroy, and David Wise. In addition to the outgoing members of the vestry, the nominating committee consisted of John Crowder, May Fox, Mac Purrington, Kaye Redford, Frank Reichel, and John Sherman. Purrington chaired the committee and Luke was co-chair. ❖



Sarah Bartenstein

Abounding in blessings

By Allen Goolsby, Melinda Hardy, Braxton Hill
Annual Giving Campaign Co-Chairs

As the world relies more and more on digital communication, virtual connection, and instant gratification, St. Stephen's Church offers human contact and mutual support. No matter how rapidly the world changes, no matter how disconnected and distracted we seem, St. Stephen's continues to serve as a special place focused on bedrock fundamentals that never change, a spiritual home for people from all walks of life to receive nourishment for bodies and souls.

Consider the meaningful daily services—even the small gestures—rendered beyond the parish where volunteers, clergy and staff extend a hand to someone in need: a member of the staff delivering a bag of groceries for someone in search of their next meal; a parishioner providing an extra educational lift for a young student at Fairfield County Elementary School; a jail minister taking Communion and companionship to inmates, showing them that they are not forgotten. In considering the special care and attention of staff and clergy for the sick and the dying, the just-born, the newly-married, the grieving, the lonely and the joyful, we are indeed abounding in God's blessings. And remember the corporate unity that overcomes division or estrangement at Sunday services, or on special occasions such as Thanksgiving Day when we stand to sing patriotic songs, or Christmas Eve, when we kneel to sing "Silent night." How blessed we are.

We are also blessed by your generosity, and grateful to the 891 individuals and families who have made a pledge for 2019 to support the ministries of St. Stephen's Church. As this edition of *Seasons of the Spirit* went to the printer, we had received pledges of \$2.7 million, putting us in striking distance of this year's annual giving goal of \$2.9 million. While we receive other support each year from a variety of sources including our endowment, pledges account for more than 90 percent of our annual revenues.

As the vestry is in the process of completing the 2019 budget, we urge those who have not yet pledged to consider doing so promptly and thereby add more certainty to the budgeting process. Our objective is to have a budget with sufficient funds to ensure that St. Stephen's will continue to provide a broad array of services and support, both within and outside our vital parish. ❖

St. Stephen's continues to serve as a special place focused on bedrock fundamentals that never change, a spiritual home for people from all walks of life to receive nourishment for bodies and souls.

Seasons of the Spirit
Lent/Easter
Spring 2019
Issue Number 31

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 & Café Manager*
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*
Barry Cleaton, *Assistant Market Manager*
Donald Clements, *Sexton*
Kerry Court (kcourt), *Director, Virginia Girls Choir*
Sarah-Keel Crews (skcrews), *Minister to Children and Youth*
Chuck Dixon, *Sexton*
Chris Edwards (cedwards), *Director, St. Stephen's Choir*
Melissa Hipes (mhipes), *Finance Manager*
Chris Holman, *Sexton*
The Rev. Gary D. Jones (gjones), *Rector*
Deborah Lawrence (dlawrence), *Director of Outreach*
Betsy Lee (blee), *Office Manager*
Becky Lehman (blehman), *Hospitality & Communication Assistant*
Becky McDaniel (bmcdaniel), *Associate Rector & Director of Family Ministry*
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 & Sunday Community Supper Cook*
Josh Rockett (jrockett), *Outreach Coordinator*
Marshall Rotella, *Sexton*
Andy Russell (arussell), *Minister to Children and Youth*
The Rev. William L. Sachs (bsachs), *Priest Associate*
Allison Seay (aseay), *Associate for Religion & the Arts*
Steve Simon (ssimon), *Facilities Manager*
Michael Simpson, *Director of Celtic Service Musicians*
Elizabeth Spell (weddings), *Wedding Coordinator*
Garner Stewart (farmersmarket), *Market Manager*
Wei-Li Suen, *Palmer Hall accompanist*
Greg Vick (gvick), *Principal Organist*

Our missionaries in Argentina
Heidi Schmidt
Monica Vega

Vestry

Term expires 2020
Melinda Hardy
Braxton Hill, *Register*
Richard Kay
Martha Orr Proutt
Cyndy Seal
Chip Tompkins

Term expires 2021
Mary Bacon, *Treasurer*
Orran Brown Sr.
Robert Dibble
Mollie Hines Mitchell
Alston Williams
Wesley Wright

Term expires 2022
Bobby Fauntleroy, *Assistant Treasurer*
L.H. Ginn
Alice Goodwin
Lynn Ivey, *Junior Warden*
Allison Koschak, *Senior Warden*
Shelley Spalding

Seasons of the Spirit

Sarah Bartenstein, *editor*
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St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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Kerry Court to move to Washington

Kerry Court, who has served as director of the Virginia Girls Choir since the fall of 2016, will leave Richmond at the end of the academic year to join her husband Ben in Washington, D.C., where he began a new job last year. The Courts have a young son, James, born in December 2017. Kerry Court is also a choral director at St. Catherine's School.

During her time as director of the Virginia Girls Choir, the choir's numbers have grown, and choristers, their parents and other volunteers and staff have held several successful fundraisers to support this auditioned, city-wide choir based at St. Stephen's. Last May, for example, they held a very popular Mother's Day concert and tea, and last December, the girls performed with Sanctuary, the Compline choir, in a Winter Solstice evening concert. That concert was the first of its kind at St. Stephen's, and the turnout was remarkable, especially on the Friday night before Christmas.

"We are all going to miss Kerry in a big way," said Gary Jones, rector. "Her sincere love for the girls and her focus on helping them achieve musical excellence have built a strong community and a beautiful sound. Young people need the kind of community Kerry fostered, and we all need the beauty they created."

In a letter to choir families, Court wrote, "The Virginia Girls Choir has been a blessing to me. Your daughters are not only talented, but are kind, mature, passionate, and thoughtful. They are the ones that make this ensemble so special, specifically their love for the music, and for each other." ❀



Kerry Court with the Virginia Girls Choir at Evensong

St. Stephen's begins search for full-time music director

For the past two and a half years, since the untimely death of Peter Hopkins—the last full-time music director to serve our parish—St. Stephen's has been blessed with the talents and dedication of several outstanding musicians filling important roles on a part-time basis: Chris Edwards as director of St. Stephen's Choir, Greg Vick as principal organist, Kerry Court as director of the Virginia Girls Choir, Michael Simpson as director of Sanctuary (the Compline choir) and of Celtic service musicians, and Dawn Childs as director of Palmer Hall children's choirs. Each has another demanding job (teaching, working at another church, or other occupation), making their service truly a labor of love in support of the beautiful worship and music St. Stephen's offers.

With the impending departure of Court, who will move to Washington, D.C., at the end of the 2018-19 school year, the rector has decided not to call another part-time director, but to search for a full-time music director, a musician with outstanding choral conducting and organ skills, as well as demonstrated administrative ability. A search committee advising Gary Jones includes Edwards and Vick, and parishioners Nan Hall, Christopher Lindbloom, Pamela O'Berry, and Jim Smith-Parham.

The job description is posted on the parish Web site, and has been disseminated through such channels as the Diocese of Virginia's transition ministry office, Episcopal News Service, the Association of Anglican Musicians, the American Guild of Organists, social media, and our parish communications. Interested musicians should visit our Web site for details about the job and how to apply: ststephensRVA.org/musicdirector. ❀