

A weekly meditation

God in the street

Recently I attended the monthly “Mass in the street” in Libertador San Martin, in the province of Jujuy, northern Argentina. It takes place right along Highway 34, the major route that runs north and south. The community is especially devoted to St. Expedito (the patron saint of urgent causes—I affectionately call him St. Speedy). There is a large statue of him on the sidewalk next to Rt. 34 and on the 19th of the month there is Mass outside.

Chairs are strewn in rows from the corner, making an L shape, and the altar is at the corner end. There can be several hundred people attending. Behind the presiding priest you can see and hear trucks, motorbikes, and cars blazing by, dust clouds in the wake of the massive trucks, and the profound beauty of Jesus erupting there in the midst of the business of life in the streets, where Jesus spent most of his time.

It is lovely to have quiet places to worship, to rest in God. I have discovered it is just as profound to discover God in the midst of our daily life as we meet each other in the streets. This was especially so for me on this day. An old native woman—a regular—sat in the front row. The look on her face as she sat, listened, and prayed was startling. A long, hard life was etched in her expressions. I was drawn to her. At the end of Mass, as she stumbled her way towards the altar with a huge bottle of water waiting to be blessed, the penny dropped and I realized that she was blind. That wasn't going to stop her, though, from getting her blessing. Neighbors quickly came to lead her on.

And there in the streets I found God.

HEIDI SCHMIDT

Heidi wrote this reflection soon after she and Monica Vega began their new ministry in Argentina. Our two missionaries recently concluded a visit to St. Stephen's accompanied by Padre Fernando Ortiz, the priest who celebrated this Mass. You can see a photo of it at ststephensRVA.org/internationaloutreach.

Author of *The Damascus Road* preaches, speaks in today's Forum

When we asked Jay Parini how he chose the subject for his latest historical novel, *The Damascus Road*—St. Stephen's summer book—he told us, “I chose to write about Paul because so much of what we know of Christianity derives from him. He was a thought pioneer. His letters are the first Christian texts, by far; and so much of theology was formulated by him. . . . He was a force in the world, too—a wild man in some ways. But his ferocity was necessary to forge a religious vision, to summon such a vision and declare it pure.” Whether you read *The Damascus Road* or not, you're sure to find Parini's talk in today's Forum fascinating (Fellowship Hall, 10:10 a.m.) He is also the preacher at 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m. today.

Welcome to St. Stephen's Church

Whoever you are, this church exists for you. Our mission is not so much to get your religious doctrine sorted out, your beliefs in line with some abstract notion of orthodoxy, as it is to welcome you into a deeper and more fulfilling life.

This is a big church, which means there is a place for you. If you are very devout, you'll find good company here. If you feel more like a miserable sinner, a skeptical doubter, or an open-minded agnostic, there are folks like you here. If you feel as if you've failed terribly, just know that we're with you. Most of all we hope you sense a beauty and sacredness here, a desire to love, forgive, and care for others. If you sense that, you are sensing the life-giving presence of God.

Each weekend, we offer several worship services: Sunday at 8:00, 9:00, 11:15 a.m. (Holy Eucharist from the Book of Common Prayer), and 5:30 p.m. (Celtic, contemplative Communion) and 8:00 p.m. (sung Compline). At 9:00 a.m. on Sunday, there are simultaneous services in the main church and Palmer Hall. Children are most welcome at either one; the service in the main church feels more transcendent to some, the one in Palmer Hall more conversational and informal. We also offer Holy Eucharist at 5:30 p.m. on Saturday in Palmer Hall.

Please know that all are welcome to receive Communion. In fact, everything this church offers is open to you. Join in anything that looks helpful or interesting, and let us know how we can help you get oriented and connected. We are glad you're here.

Gary D. Jones, *Rector*

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NEWS

SIGN UP FOR WEEKLY EMAILS AT STSTEPHENS RVA.ORG/EMAIL

This Thursday: golf tournament raises funds for outreach

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

St. Stephen's annual golf tournament raises crucial funds for outreach. Register a foursome, or sign up individually and we'll place you on a team. Not a golfer? Be a sponsor! Visit ststephensRVA.org/golf or find brochures at the outreach table.

Call for Confirmation mentors

ORIENTATION: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24 // NOON

Confirmation mentors serve as spiritual companions to young people preparing to be confirmed. Each mentor is carefully matched with a 9th grader and asked to help shepherd him or her during a year-long discernment. The mentor's primary responsibility is to offer prayerful support, modeling faithfulness, service, and active engagement with this church community. The mentor should be a good listener and a steady presence, willing to share his or her own understanding and perspective, to encourage question-asking and discussion, and to be emotionally available--honest, patient, gracious, sincere, responsive, and generous of spirit. Mentors should be available to meet with their confirmand on a regular basis, ideally at least once a month, for conversation and fellowship. Please contact Allison Seay, aseay@ststephensRVA.org, to learn more or to sign up for orientation.

Consider serving as a lay eucharistic visitor

Lay eucharistic visitors take the reserved sacrament to homebound and hospitalized parishioners after Sunday morning services. On your assigned Sunday, you receive a Communion kit at the end of a church service. After the congregation prays for you, you leave and go to the person who has requested Communion. We seek adults who have a deep reverence for the sacrament of Holy Communion and who feel called to extend God's love to those who cannot come to church. If you'd like to explore this ministry further, please contact Steve McGehee at smcgehee@ststephensRVA.org. (Additional details are on page 18 of the "Getting Connected" booklet.)

Orientation and training offered for chalice bearers

You may have read about serving as a chalice bearer in the new "Getting Connected" booklet available on tables throughout the parish house. Since it was printed, some training dates have changed:

- Orientation for all chalice bearers (new and continuing, serving in morning services or the Celtic service) will take place Sunday, September 29, at 1 p.m.
- Training for Celtic service chalice bearers, October 13 at 3 p.m.
- Training for morning chalice bearers: October 17 at 6 p.m. and October 20 at 1 p.m.

If you would like to serve as a chalice bearer, please contact Penny Nash, pnash@ststephensRVA.org and attend one orientation session and one training session. Chalice bearers serve on a rota for up to three years; we're looking for 18 new chalice bearers for our morning services rota.

Emmaus Groups at St. Stephen's

Emmaus Groups consist of six to 10 parishioners who meet weekly to tend to their spiritual lives and grow in Christian community. The groups are centers of prayer, hospitality, and welcome, small communities within the larger parish church. Each group has one or two leaders who receive training in facilitating small groups. The core of the gatherings is attentiveness to the spiritual growth of participants and the experience of authentic community.

If you have been thinking about joining an Emmaus Group, please attend one of the following sessions led by Gary Jones, Allison Seay, and Penny Nash. Sign up for either session at ststephensRVA.org/emmaus.

- Monday, September 23, noon (includes lunch, donation-based)
- Wednesday, September 25, 6:30 p.m. (after Wednesday supper)

IT'S A KEEPER: PLEASE TAKE THIS NEWSLETTER HOME TO USE THROUGHOUT THE WEEK.

What ancient wisdom teaches us about 21st century uncertainty and chaos

SEPTEMBER 29 // 10:10 A.M.

Next Sunday in the Forum, Ryan Olson will invite us to consider what two ancient figures, St. Augustine and Gregory the Great, have to teach us in this time of uncertainty and chaos. Both taught at the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, and Olson will help us consider how their faith, wisdom, and insight might inform us today. Olson is director of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture at the University of Virginia. He holds a doctorate in classical languages and literature from the University of Oxford and is a Fellow in Late Antiquity at the Center for Hellenic Studies at Harvard University.

Sunday offerings for children and youth

Staff and volunteers have prepared a wonderful program year for children and youth. Brochures at Information Central, and our Web site, detail the programs for each age group. In addition, the fall 2019 edition of **Seasons of the Spirit** describes youth offerings in detail. Where does your child or young person go this morning?

- The nursery for babies and for any children not participating in Little Lambs or Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, up to age 4 (in the basement/preschool area); available during education hour and the 9 a.m., 11:15 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. services
- Little Lambs for ages 2 and 3, in the basement, adjacent to the nursery (10 a.m.)
- Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for ages 3-6 and grades 1-3, top floor of the parish house (10 a.m.)
- Sunday school for grades 4 and 5 in Room 7 (10:10 a.m.)
- Sunday school for grades 6 and 7 in Room 17 (10:10 a.m.)
- Sunday school for grade 8 in Room 4 (10:10 a.m.)
- Senior High Sunday school for grades 9-12 in the senior high room near the café (10:10 a.m.)

The Women of St. Stephen's begin program year with a presentation by the rector

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 // 9:30 A.M.

The Women of St. Stephen's announce a new year of programs, beginning with the October 1 Women's Forum featuring the Rev. Gary Jones. Gary's topic is "Beyond the stone façade." How do the architecture, symbols, and furnishings of our worship space teach us and inspire a deeper faith? Come for refreshments in the Fellowship Hall at 9:30 a.m.; the program begins at 10 in the church. The program is free, no registration is required and all are welcome, including men.

New Cub Scout pack forming

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 30 // 6 P.M.

St. Stephen's has been home to Troop 418 for ages 11-17 for more than 95 years; now we're adding a Cub Scout pack for ages 5-10 (boys and girls). Come to an open house/orientation in Room 3 for parents and children interested in this new pack. If you have questions or comments, please contact the scoutmaster, Kirk Richardson, at dkirk@gmail.com or 804.307.5102.

CALENDAR

MORE AT STSTEPHENS.RVA.ORG/CALENDAR

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 9 a.m. in main church and Palmer Hall*
Sunday school, Forum, Middle School Choir (grades 5-8), 10:10 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 11:15 a.m.* *followed by reception*
Celtic Service, 5:30 p.m.*, *followed by Sunday Community Supper*
Compline, 8 p.m.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 23

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m.
Fruit Ministry, 9 a.m.
Chair Yoga, 11 a.m.
Emmaus Groups information session, noon
Food pantry distribution, 1-3 p.m.
Yoga class, 4:30 p.m.
Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m.
Contemplative Prayer, 8:45 a.m.
Being Present, 6 p.m. (beginners), 7:30 p.m. (continuing students)
Yoga for Vibrant Aging, 9:30 a.m.
Confirmation mentor session, noon
Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m.
Mothers Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.*
Restorative Yoga, 9:30 a.m.
Cherub Choir rehearsal (age 4-grade 1), 5 p.m.
Palmer Hall Choir rehearsal (grades 2-4), 5:30 p.m.
Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.
Wonderful Wednesdays supper, 5:45-6:30 p.m.
Emmaus Groups information session, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m.
Thursday Bible Study, 10:30 a.m.
Golf tournament for outreach, noon
Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.
Mindful Yoga, 6 p.m.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m.
Contemplative Prayer, 8:45 a.m.
Needlepoint group, 9 a.m.
Evening Prayer, 5:30 p.m.

** denotes child care available for age 4 and younger*

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

Farmers Market, 8 a.m.-noon
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 9 a.m. in main church and Palmer Hall*
Sunday school, Forum, Middle School Choir (grades 5-8), 10:10 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 11:15 a.m.* *followed by reception*
Orientation for all chalice bearers, 1 p.m.
Celtic Service, 5:30 p.m.*, *followed by Sunday Community Supper*
Compline, 8 p.m.

Flower guild presents free workshop

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11 // 9:30 A.M.

St. Stephen's flower guild will offer a workshop on arranging flowers on the altar led by two talented arrangers from Galilee Episcopal Church in Virginia Beach. The workshop is free; if you plan to attend, please send an email to flowerguild@ststephensRVA.org. This is open to all; you do not have to be a member of the flower guild to attend.

Celtic school offered at St. Stephen's

John Philip Newell founded the School of Celtic Consciousness, a three-year curriculum, to bring the wisdom of this spiritual tradition to the larger Christian household. Each year of the curriculum is unique; they may be taken in any order. One of the locations for the program has been Richmond—specifically Roslyn—each fall. This year, in addition to the residential program at Roslyn (which is full), Year 2 of the school will be offered for day students here at St. Stephen's, October 25-27; its theme is "The Song of the Sacred Earth." This is open to all, regardless of whether you have taken Year 1. The daily schedule consists of prayer, presentations by Newell, meditative practices, silence, and discussion. The tuition (\$245) includes several, though not all, meals. If you or someone you know would like to learn more or register for the school, go to <https://heartbeat.org/school-of-celtic-consciousness>.

Redefining aging

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4 // 7 P.M.

Dr. Louise Aronson is a geriatrician, professor of medicine, and writer, whose latest book, *Elderhood: Redefining Aging, Transforming Medicine, Reimagining Life*, encourages us to rethink our later years and their potential to be the most satisfying time of our lives. As medical advances allow us to live longer, healthier lives, many of us will spend more time in elderhood than we did in childhood and adolescence. Dr. Aronson argues that as the proportion of elders to younger people expands, new approaches are needed. We are thrilled that Dr. Aronson has accepted our invitation to speak here. *Elderhood* is available in our bookshop. Start reading this fascinating book and reserve your seat at ststephensRVA.org/speakers. The suggested donation is \$25.

Getting connected at St. Stephen's Church

Did you pick up a copy of our new guide to volunteer and service opportunities at St. Stephen's? "Getting Connected" is available at Information Central and on tables throughout the parish house. Please help yourself!



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

6000 Grove Avenue

Richmond, Virginia 23226

ststephensRVA.org 804.288.2867

Hear firsthand about RE:work's progress

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1 // 5:30-6:30 P.M.

RE:work RICHMOND is up and running and we want you to know more about this exciting initiative. Join participants, volunteers, and staff to hear firsthand the good things happening in the East End. RE:work participants will be in the Fellowship Hall to discuss their experiences. Hear about what this employment initiative means to them and their families. For more information contact Deb Lawrence, dlawrence@ststephensRVA.org or visit RE:work's Web site, reworkrichmond.org.

Wednesday suppers

5:45-6:30 P.M.

We are trying something new with the Wonderful Wednesdays supper: we've moved to a donation-based model like the one we use for the Sunday Community Supper. We hope that all who can will make a donation; you might consider donating \$7 for an adult or teenager's meal, and \$4 for a child's meal. If you don't have that much, donate what you can. If you can't donate anything, that's fine, too. If you can donate more, please do; this allows us to offer supper to all, regardless of their ability to pay every week. Menus are posted at ststephensRVA.org/parishsupper.

Opportunities for youth to engage in service

This year, senior high youth have regular after-school opportunities to engage in community service with Josh Rockett, our outreach coordinator. On the first and third Tuesdays of the month, groups will go to St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Church Hill to assist with their food pantry. On the second and fourth Wednesdays, they can go with Josh to Fairfield Court Elementary School to work with students there. Additional details about these and other weekly offerings for senior high youth are at ststephensRVA.org/weekly-senior-high and the fall edition of *Seasons of the Spirit*.

Groups and classes at St. Stephen's

This year St. Stephen's has a broad array of groups and classes on the Bible (the Old and New Testaments as well as specific books of the Bible), journaling as a spiritual practice, and other topics. Descriptions are available in a brochure at Information Central, in *Seasons of the Spirit*, at ststephensRVA.org/classes and ststephensRVA.org/biblestudy. Registration is advised or required for many of these groups; you'll find links to registration on these pages.

Blessing of the Animals service

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 6 // 3:00 P.M.

Like churches across the world, St. Stephen's holds a beloved service near the feast day of St. Francis when we give thanks to God for our pets, and those pets receive a blessing from one of the clergy. This year's Blessing of the Animals service will be held at the Three Chopt Road entrance to the church at 3 p.m. on Sunday, October 6. We always welcome lots of dogs, but cats, gerbils, rabbits, fish, and other pets are also welcome. The service will take place outdoors, weather permitting. If it rains, we'll go indoors.