

A weekly meditation

Martin Luther declared that John 3:16—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life"—is "the Gospel in miniature," or the Gospel in a nutshell. Luther, a highly opinionated man, had a lot to say in his life—he wrote hundreds of sermons, essays, commentaries, books and letters—but nevertheless, for him, this one verse is the essence of the story. This is the Good News.

Personally, I don't see why a nutshell only has to contain one verse. And so, with apologies to Martin Luther, I want to add the next verse as well: "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him." Because as much as I like the part about the Love, I also need the reminder that the Good News has nothing to do with condemnation and everything to do with God's desire to redeem everything and everyone, no matter how messed up things (or we) are.

In John's Gospel, the world doesn't really know God, and the world rejects God, preferring secrecy and doing things in the dark to bringing the good to light. Sometimes things don't seem to have changed that much in the two millennia since. There's still a lot going on out there that looks like a rejection of God and God's desires for the world. And there's a part of me that wants God to come down pretty hard on this.

But instead, because of Love, God wants to save this crazy, broken world that I get so frustrated with. God sees hope and possibility where I see an irredeemable mess. And that, in a nutshell, is Good News.

PENNY NASH

Lenten retreat to be held this Friday and Saturday

FRIDAY, MARCH 17 (6-9 P.M.) ; SATURDAY, MARCH 18 (9 A.M.-NOON)

In this two-part retreat, Friday evening's presentation, "The Integrated Life," focuses on the four corners of the human organism (bio/psycho/social/spiritual), each of which must be nurtured if we seek to be whole. On Saturday, in "A Healthy Spirituality for the 21st Century," Dr. McGehee will discuss that role of a healthy psychological worldview occupies in our spiritual well-being. Attend either day (\$25 suggested donation) or both (\$40). This Episcopal priest and Jungian analyst is widely known as a lecturer and educator in the field of psychology and religion. Please sign up for this offering (you can attend either session or both) at ststephensRVA/mcgehee, or stop by the parish office during the week. Read about another Lenten retreat on page 3. Flyers about Lent at St. Stephen's, and booklets of Lenten devotions, are available on a table across from the parish office.

Celebrated poet coming to St. Stephen's

THURSDAY, MARCH 23 // 7 P.M.

We have been anticipating Jane Hirshfield's visit to St. Stephen's for nearly a year. As other poets and speakers—most recently, Barbara Brown Taylor—have visited and learned that Hirshfield would be here in March, they've shared with us their admiration for her work. Hirshfield's most recent poetry collection, *The Beauty*, was highlighted in Allison Seay's Forum series, "We Become What We Behold." At last, her visit is nearly here! Not only is she a poet of great renown—an "elegant ambassador for poetry in the greater world," in the words of former poet laureate Kay Ryan—she is also an award-winning translator of ancient Japanese writers, classical Chinese poets, and even the lesser-known Inuit (Eskimo) poets. She is also a practicing Zen Buddhist who took leave from writing poetry to live in a Zen monastery for three years, mostly in silence. Make your reservation now at ststephensRVA.org/hirshfield.

Communion preparation start date moved

The communion preparation class for children age 7 and up, and their parents, will begin **March 29** (later than previously announced). That means that if you missed the earlier registration deadline, there is still time to sign up. Additional details are available in a brochure at Information Central, on our Web site at ststephensRVA.org/communionpreparation, or contact Gene LeCouteur, glecouteur@ststephensRVA.org.

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NEWS

SIGN UP FOR WEEKLY EMAILS AT STSTEPHENSVA.ORG/EMAIL

Sunday Forum: 'The Vacancy Made Visible'

TODAY // 10:10 A.M.

Today in the forum, Allison Seay offers a Lenten presentation titled, "The Vacancy Made Visible." The German theologian and mystic Meister Eckhart claimed that "God is found in the human soul not by addition, but by subtraction." Just as silence can be illuminating when studying the Bible (as practitioners of *lectio divina* know), so can negative space in the visual realm. Allison will introduce "Erasure Art," which makes use of negative space, removal, and reclamation as a way of discovery and rebirth. In preparation for Jane Hirshfield's reading later this month, this presentation will offer other ways of thinking about the possibilities of poetry and the ability to delight in its form.

Bryan Stevenson, 'Just Mercy,' and screening of '13th'

Many in this parish have read Bryan Stevenson's book about the criminal justice system in the United States, *Just Mercy*. In addition, well over 100 parishioners took part in a series focusing on the book last fall which included small group discussion as well as presentations by local officials, attorneys, and former inmates. Two upcoming events will provide additional opportunities to reflect on the issues raised in Stevenson's New York Times bestseller.

On **Tuesday, April 4 at 6:30 p.m.**, we will host a community screening of "13th," an Oscar-nominated documentary providing an in-depth look at the U.S. prison system and its relationship to our nation's racial history. Stevenson is one of the experts interviewed in this film. This event is free and open to all; registration is not required, but is helpful to us in planning. Please go to ststephensRVA.org/stevenson.

The next week, on **Wednesday, April 12, at 6 p.m.**, Stevenson will speak at Virginia Commonwealth University (which has been using *Just Mercy* as a campus-wide book selection throughout the current academic year). Information about carpooling and van transportation from St. Stephen's to this event at the Siegel Center will be forthcoming.

Remember your nametag

If you attended last Sunday's Forum, you heard our new associate rector, the Rev. Stephen McGehee, ask us to wear nametags while he gets to know everyone's names. This is, of course, wonderful advice year-round. This is a large parish and we like to be able to call one another by name. If you have a nametag, please wear it when you are here. If you do not have a nametag, or you need a replacement, please request one at any of the Welcome Tables. When your nametag is ready, it will be placed at the Welcome Table closest to the large parking lot. Questions? Call the parish office. 288.2867.

This year's Richmond Three Choirs Festival honors Peter Hopkins

SATURDAY, MARCH 25 // 7 P.M.

Each year the choirs of three Episcopal churches in Richmond—St. Stephen's, St. Paul's and St. James's—come together for a service or concert. This year's Three Choirs Festival will be hosted by St. Paul's (815 E. Ninth Street, across from Capitol Square) and is a service of Lessons and Carols for the Feast of the Annunciation. The music sung by these 100 voices will include Josef Rheinberger's *Stabat Mater*. This special Choral Evensong will be in memory of Peter Hopkins, our former director of music, who died last September. No reservations are required for this free community event.

The brain-gut connection

THURSDAY, MARCH 30 // 7 P.M.

JoAnn Bibb DeForge, who has taught numerous classes here on mindfulness meditation and Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, will lead a panel discussion with Savita Srivastava, M.D., a gastroenterologist, and Tina Shiver, a registered dietician and functional medicine practitioner, about the ways that our gut, our microbiome, and our mind are connected. These connections affect our health not just in the GI tract, but in many other ways. Scientists and clinicians are uncovering important new findings about how these relationships affect mood disorders, skin conditions, and other areas of our health which we might not associate with the gut. This event is free and open to the public; information about the speakers is available at ststephensRVA.org/microbiome.

An announcement about the outreach component of our capital campaign

When St. Stephen's embarked on a capital campaign to repair and replace aging systems, improve accessibility, and refurbish our worship space, the leadership of the campaign committed to tithing the campaign funds for an outreach project or projects. Our focus is on partner ministries, particularly in Richmond's East End, where our sister parish, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, serves as an important spiritual center.

Early on, it came to our attention that St. Peter's was intent on making its own church building completely accessible, and wanted to install an elevator. The Church Hill parish has been raising funds toward this goal, and has made great progress. Helping them cross the finish line seemed appropriate since their concern about accessibility mirrored the one we addressed in our own buildings. Our campaign leadership and vestry have heartily endorsed as our first capital campaign outreach grant the expenditure of up to \$50,000 toward St. Peter's elevator.

The Rev. Andrew Terry, St. Peter's pastor, said, "This is truly good news. We are grateful for the generous gift from St. Stephen's. This gift, together with St. Peter's own fundraising efforts and congregational pledges, will make our worship space fully accessible to the East End and to our members regardless of mobility challenges."

Circle One to attend Lenten Series together

TUESDAY, MARCH 28

The Women of St. Stephen's, our parish's chapter of the Episcopal Church Women, used to be composed of several "circles," or small groups within the larger group. Though that practice has waned over the years, Circle One continues to meet each month on the second Tuesday (one week after the monthly Women's Forum), and everyone is welcome to take part. Often Circle One features a speaker, but this month the group will instead go to St. Paul's Episcopal Church downtown for the Lenten Preaching Series on March 28 (there will be no regular meeting on March 14). The 30-minute service begins at 12:30 p.m. Parking can be a challenge, so carpooling is recommended. To learn more, please call Marti Thomas, 783.3450 or Fern Newsom, 288.9461.

Lenten retreat: 'Is this heaven?'

SATURDAY, APRIL 1 // 9 A.M.-NOON

What is heaven? Will it look like a baseball diamond in an Iowa cornfield? Will it be like dancing cheek to cheek? Will it have streets of gold? Although we explore possibilities about this life and the next in our faith traditions, Greg Garrett teaches that we frequently do so in literature, art, and popular culture as well. In this retreat, we'll examine what stories about heaven, hell, and purgatory have to teach us about this life. Greg returns to St. Stephen's (he spoke about the Harry Potter saga here in December) to talk about stories of the afterlife, and to invite our reflection on how these stories might shape our own belief and practice. Suggested donation: \$25; please register at ststephensRVA.org/garrett.

CALENDAR

MORE AT STSTEPHENSVA.ORG/CALENDAR

SUNDAY, MARCH 12—LENT 2

Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 9 a.m.*, *in Palmer Hall and main church*

Sunday Forum, Bible study, parent group, Sunday school, 10:10 a.m.*

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 11:15 a.m.*, *followed by reception*

Celtic Service, 5:30 p.m.*

Sunday Community Supper, 6:30 p.m.

Compline, 8 p.m.

MONDAY, MARCH 13

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., *coffee, fellowship follow*

Fruit Ministry, 9 a.m.

Chair Yoga, 11 a.m.

Food pantry distribution, 1-3 p.m.

Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

Guided meditation, 6 p.m.

TUESDAY, MARCH 14

Fathers Bible Study, 7 a.m.

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., *coffee, fellowship follow*

Contemplative Prayer, 8:45 a.m.

Yoga for Vibrant Aging, 9:30 a.m.

Meditation, noon

Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

Mindfulness Meditation, 6 p.m.

Healing and Being a Healing Person, 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., *coffee, fellowship follow*

Chair Yoga, 11 a.m.

Evensong with Virginia Girls Choir, 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday supper, 5:45-6:30 p.m.

Instructed Eucharist for youth confirmands, 6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 16

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., *coffee, fellowship follow*

Thursday Bible Study, 10:30 a.m.

Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

Chi Kung, 6 p.m.

Joel Salatin, 6-9 p.m.

FRIDAY, MARCH 17

Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., *coffee, fellowship follow*

Stitchers group, 9 a.m.

Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

Lenten Retreat with Pittman McGehee, 6-9 p.m.

SATURDAY, MARCH 18

Lenten Retreat with Pittman McGehee, 9 a.m.-noon

Farmers Market, 9 a.m.-noon, *indoors*

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 5:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, MARCH 19—LENT 3

Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 9 a.m.*, *in Palmer Hall and main church*

Sunday Forum, Bible study, parent group, Sunday school, 10:10 a.m.*

Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 11:15 a.m.*, *followed by reception*

Celtic Service, 5:30 p.m.*

Sunday Community Supper, 6:30 p.m.

Compline, 8 p.m.

**child care available for age 4 and younger*

Parish Staff

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

Janet S. Allen (jallen), *Associate for Development & Operations*
Stan Barnett (sbarnett),
Coordinator of Kitchen Ministry

Sarah R. Bartenstein (sbartenstein), *Director of Communication*

Marion S. Chenault (mchenault),
Preschool Director (288-6401)

Dawn Childs (dchilds), *Assistant for Children's Music Ministry*

Donald Clements, *Sexton*

Sarah-Keel Crews (skcrews),
Youth Ministry Coordinator
Kerry Court (kcourt), *Director, Virginia Girls Choir and Virginia Boys Choir*

Sean Dobb, *Sexton*

Kyle Dosier (farmersmarket),
Assistant Market Manager

Chris Edwards (cedwards),
Interim Director, St. Stephen's Choir

Melissa Hipes (mhipes), *Finance Manager*

Chris Holman, *Sexton*

The Rev. Gary D. Jones (gjones), *Rector*

Greta Kidd (gkidd), *Wedding Coordinator*

Deborah Lawrence (dlawrence), *Director of Outreach*

The Rev. Eugene H. LeCouteur (glecouteur), *Associate Rector*
Betsy Lee (blee), *Office Manager & Pastoral Care Assistant*

Becky Lehman (blehman),
Assistant for Hospitality & Communication

The Rev. Weston Mathews (wmathews), *Associate Rector*

Christi McFadden (cmcfadden), *Finance Assistant*

The Rev. Stephen Y. McGehee (smcgehee), *Associate Rector*

The Rev. Claudia W. Merritt (cmerritt), *Priest Associate*

The Rev. Penny A. Nash (pnash), *Associate Rector*

Ben Nelson (bnelson), *Sexton, Pressman, Sunday Community Supper chef*

Matthew Oltmann, *Sexton*
Paige Reisenfeld (madmin),
Music Assistant

Kate Ruby (farmersmarket),
Market Manager

The Rev. William L. Sachs (bsachs), *Priest Associate*

Allison Seay (aseay), *Associate for Religion & the Arts*

Steven Simon (ssimon),
Facilities Manager

Michael Simpson (msimpson),
Director of Celtic Service Musicians

Lamonté Smith, *Sexton*

Michael E. Sweeney (msweeney), *Director of Family Ministries*

Greg Vick (gvick), *Principal Organist*

Vestry

Term expires 2018

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

Term Expires 2019

John Bates, *Treasurer*
Judy Buchanan
Marie Carter

Calle Luke
Mac McElroy
David Wise

Term expires 2020

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

Bill Armstrong, *Assistant Treasurer*

Café progress

As described in the Advent/Christmas/Epiphany edition of **Seasons of the Spirit**, a project team formed in the summer of 2016 has been at work on a new ministry—a café in the former choir room. The project is progressing well and the team is working toward a fall 2017 opening. Michael Sweeney and members of the café project team will speak at the Sunday Forum on **March 26, 10:10 a.m.**, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions at that time. If you are interested in learning more, or supporting this exciting, innovative ministry, please come to the Forum that day, or be in touch with Michael, **msweeney@ststephensRVA.org**.

Easter flower memorials

DEADLINE: FRIDAY, APRIL 7

Easter Day is April 16. Our flower guild does a magnificent job of adorning the church for this joyous day. Many people like to make donations toward the cost of Easter flowers to remember a loved one. These memorials are acknowledged in the bulletins printed for Easter services. If you would like to give an Easter flower memorial, please contact Judy Kidd, **jett@verizon.net**, or 285.1689. Memorials **must be received by April 7** in order to be included in Easter bulletins.

You're invited to join the Hymn Choir

Do you love to sing but don't have available time for weekly choir rehearsals and services? Try the Hymn Choir! One Sunday each month, the 9 a.m. service features instrumental music at the offertory and communion, and since we give our choirs that morning off, adult volunteers are needed to help lead hymn singing. This choir rehearses just before the service. It's a wonderful opportunity to participate in the music ministry at St. Stephen's without a significant commitment of time. If you are interested or want to learn more, please email Chris Edwards, interim director of St. Stephen's Choir, **cedwards@ststephensRVA.org**. In fact, the hymn choir is singing at today's 9 a.m. service, and will sing April 23 and May 14.



St. Stephen's Episcopal Church

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