Thanksgiving Day service
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 10:30 A.M.
St. Stephen's Thanksgiving Day service is unique in Richmond, and attendance rivals that of Christmas Eve and Easter Day with people coming from throughout the area to attend. Excellent preach- ing, special music (including brass) and beautiful floral arrangements enhance this service of Morning Prayer. We are delighted that our guest preacher this year will be the Rev. Robert G. Hetherington. Last year during the renovation of our church, the service was held next door, thanks to the gracious hospitality of our neighbor, St. Bride's Roman Catholic Church. We are excited to be back in the nave for this year's service.

Thanksgiving boxes
BEGINNING NEXT SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6
Each year at this time, St. Stephen's Church coordinates a ministry in which each of us can provide ingredients for a festive holiday meal for families who might not otherwise have one. You simply fill a box with the accompaniments for a traditional turkey dinner, and if you would like to provide a turkey as well, you may write a check to St. Stephen's for $15 (we will purchase the turkey). Recipients are identified through our local outreach partners. Boxes and instructions will be available in the Parish House at a table near the elevator and Information Central beginning next Sunday. All donations must be made by November 20.

Market going indoors
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 9 A.M.-NOON
The Farmers Market @ St. Stephen's is a year-round market, and on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, it moves indoors. Beginning November 26, come to the Fellowship Hall for winter produce, fresh eggs, grass-fed and pasture raised meats and poultry, bread, prepared foods and many other goodies. We are grateful to be able to support farmers 12 months of the year, and to offer fresh, local food to the community all year long. (The market continues outdoors every Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon, until November 26.)

Instructed Eucharist offered
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 6:30 P.M.
Each seven-week Inquirers Class concludes with an "instructed Eucharist"—a celebration of the Eucharist that includes explanation of the words and gestures we use, the vestments worn by the participants, and the history behind and scriptural basis for what we do and say. The instructed Eucharist is open to all, including any who, while not participating in the Inquirers Class, might wish to learn more about this essential expression of our faith. No registration is needed; just come to the church at 6:30.

Lunch with the rector
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, NOON
If you are new to St. Stephen's or to the Episcopal Church, welcome! Several times during the year, we hold informal gatherings with our rector, Gary Jones, to give you the opportunity to meet him and the staff, to learn more about this parish, and to ask any questions you may have. We love this opportunity to welcome you personally and to know that you feel better in a low-key setting. The next gathering is a lunch on November 17. To RSVP for this offering, please send an email to Janet Allen at jallen@ststephensRVA.org, call the parish office at 804.288.2867, or register online at ststephensRVA.org/newcomer-gatherings.

Writing a reflection for Advent or The Spirit
Each week in this newsletter, we publish a reflection from a parishioner or staff member who writes about the spiritual in everyday life. Would you like to write a reflection for The Spirit? Please send an email to Sarah Bartenstein, director of communications, sbartenstein@ststephensRVA.org, to request submission guidelines.

A pre-holiday event in May Fair House
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 10 A.M.-3 P.M.
May Fair House, the gift shop run by the Women of St. Stephen's, will host a pre-holiday bazaar in and around the shop featuring holiday merchandise and gifts, May Fair House pies and other goodies, and the opportunity to order fresh magnolia wreaths. Special vendors, discounts, a raffle, and more are on tap. Pick up a flyer at Information Central or in the May Fair House for additional details, and help spread the word. Remember that proceeds from the May Fair House fund outreach grants selected by the Women of St. Stephen's.

Advent is coming
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27
The beginning of Advent (and a new church year) is just a month away. The Advent Fair will take place November 27 during the education hour (10:15-11) and after the 11:15 service until 1 p.m. This intergenerational event will offer activities and resources for all ages on the second floor of the parish hall—including making a fresh green Advent wreath. The Advent Fair is free; a $10 suggested donation for Advent wreath kits (oasis wreath forms, candles and candle holders) covers our costs for those items.

Do you have evergreen trees or shrubs that need trimming? Please consider bringing greens to share. More details coming soon!

It's not too early to visit the Bookshop @ St. Stephen's to select a book from our excellent selection of Advent reading. The shop will also have Advent calendars soon.

The Better Portion
Whistle while you work... What makes your workday better? For some people, the answer is a well-earned break, a leisurely lunch, or a soothing cup of tea. But for many of us, the answer is something more... or less... challenging. A few weeks ago, we explored the idea of what makes work better, and we heard some interesting responses from our readers.

We're back with another round of this series, offering a glimpse into the lives of people who have found ways to make their workdays more enjoyable. This week, we feature a story from Sarah, who shares her experience with a unique form of stress relief. Sarah is a graphic designer who works in a busy office environment, and she finds that taking time to meditate during her workday can help her stay focused and productive.

Sarah: "I've always been interested in mindfulness practices, and I've tried different methods for incorporating mindfulness into my daily routine. The one thing that really works for me is doing a short meditation during my lunch break. I find that even a few minutes of quiet time can make a big difference in how I approach the rest of my day."

In today's Forum: Paul Wallace
In today's Forum Paul Wallace will explore one of the strangest accounts of creation in scripture: the divine monologue of Job 38-41. In these chapters, in response to the poor man's plea for justice, God takes Job on a wild, woolly, and very unexpected tour of creation. Job's cosmos stands in accord with certain aspects of scientific thought: it values experience over tradition, offers a radical critique of conventional views of God, and removes human beings from the center of all things. These similarities make the Book of Job a fascinating point of departure for those who seek dialogue between Jewish and Christian religious traditions and modern science.

Paul Wallace teaches in the Department of Physics & Astronomy at Agnes Scott College and is ordained in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He also teaches occasionally at Emory University's Candler School of Theology and at Columbia Theological Seminary. He holds a PhD in nuclear physics from Duke University and an MDiv from Emory. He is the author of <i>Stars Beneath Us: Finding God in the Cosmic Cosmos</i>, available for purchase this month.

Other Sunday offerings
In addition to the Sunday Forum, adults have the following options during the Christian education hour, neither requiring registration: in Room 14, “Many Parents, One Vine,” especially for parents; in the Somerset Room (the former vestry room), Bible study led by the Rev. Penny Nash.

Remembering loved ones on All Saints’ Day
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, NOON
All Saints’ Day is a major feast of the church year. Many of us are accustomed to thinking of “saints” as people of extraordinary virtue, but in the earliest days of the church, all baptized Christians were referred to as saints. On All Saints’ Day, we are especially mindful of “the communion of saints” and the eternal reality that those who have died are very much alive in God. As we draw close to God, we are never far from loved ones who have died. If you have a loved one you would like remembered during Tuesday’s All Saints’ Day service and you have not already contacted Betty Lee in the parish office, please email her today (blee@ststephensRVA.org), or call 804.288.2867 first thing Monday morning.

Welcome, Heidi and Monica!
Our missionaries, Heidi Schmidt and Monica Vega, have been here for the past week, and will be with us until Wednesday. Heidi and Monica began a new ministry in Argentina last summer after serving in Brazil for several years. We are so blessed to have them among us!
CALENDAR

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 30–PENTECOST 24
Pledge drive
Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, in Palmer Hall and main church, 9 a.m.*
Sunday school, Forum (Paul Wallace), parent group, Bible study, 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, OCTOBER 31
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., office, 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.
Immortal Diamond/book group, 7 p.m.

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1
All Saints’ Day
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., office, fellowship follow
Contemplative Prayer, 8:45 a.m.
Women’s Forum, 10 a.m. (refreshments served at 9:10)
All Saints’ Day service, noon
Guided meditation, noon
Evensong, 5:30 p.m.
Just Mercy series, 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 2
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., office, fellowship follow
Very Gentle Yoga, 9:30 a.m.; Beginner Flow Yoga, 9:45 a.m.
Chair Yoga, 11 a.m.
Evensong, 5:30 p.m. with the Virginia Girls Choir
Wonderful Wednesdays supper, 5:45–6:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., office, fellowship follow
Yoga for the Heart, 9 a.m.
Bible Study, 10:30 a.m.
Evensong, 5:30 p.m.
Chi Kung, 6 p.m.
Dave Lucas poetry reading, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., office, fellowship follow
Stitchers groups, 9 a.m.; office, fellowship follow
Strollers groups, 9 a.m.
Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5
Farmers Market, 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, 5:30 p.m. in Palmer Hall

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 6–SUNDAY AFTER ALL SAINTS’
Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.
Holy Eucharist: Rite Two, in Palmer Hall and main church, 9 a.m.*
Sunday school, Forum, parent group, Bible study, 10:10 a.m.*
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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 7 P.M.

Dave Lucas, who teaches at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, comes to Richmond this week as part of our monthly poetry series. Lucas received his Master of Fine Arts from the University of Virginia and a Ph.D. in English language and literature from the University of Michigan. Of his first collection, Weather, one review explains, “The weather of these poems arises from both the lush light of the natural world and the hard rain of industry. Poem by poem, the book surveys the majesty and ruin of landscape and lakefront, paying tribute to the shifting seasons of a city, of a terrain, and of those who dwell there.” No reservations are needed for these monthly readings, and they are free and open to the public. There will be time for questions, and a reception and book signing will follow. Please come and bring friends!

A not-to-be-missed conversation: John Philip Newell and Rob Bell

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In two weeks, two of the most influential voices in Christianity in the 21st century will be at St. Stephen’s Church together. John Philip Newell and Rob Bell are coming to discuss not only their distinctive approaches to spirituality, but to explore where those two traditions overlap and enrich one another, and what this can mean for the future of faith.

John Philip, no stranger to St. Stephen’s, is known around the globe for his teaching, writing, and preaching about Celtic spirituality, both its ancient roots and its fresh expressions. Rob, who comes from a more evangelical tradition, is known for his writing, film, teaching, and preaching that re-envision Christianity for our time. His most recent book, Law of Mind, represented a controversial departure from some traditional tenets of evangelical Christianity.

In late February, Rob’s regular podcast featured an interview with John Philip. Rob’s excitement about that dialogue was palpable, and it prompted an invitation to both men from Gary Jones to conduct a similar conversation here.

We expect a large crowd at this event, so we are issuing tickets to ensure that everyone has a seat. The suggested donation is $25. These are available in the parish office during regular office hours (Monday–Friday, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.) as well as outside the Large Fellowship Hall at the following times. If you reserve a ticket online (ststephensRAVA.org/bellnewell), you may pick it up at any of these times.

• Today, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
• Sunday, November 6, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
• Sunday, November 6, 6:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
• Wednesday, November 9, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.
• Sunday, November 13, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Advent Quiet Day: ‘How can this be?’
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 9 A.M.–NOON

Mary’s question to Gabriel—“how can this be?”—seems the question of a lifetime for each of us. St. Stephen’s will offer a guided retreat for quiet reflection, private writing, and a prayerful invitation to consider not only that which awaits us, but also that which already is. Sometimes it is in solitude and silence that we gain clarity or that truth is revealed. And yet it is often in the company of others that we feel confirmed, comforted, and inspired.

This retreat will be equal parts inward contemplation and outward exploration. Designed for seasoned writers and those who have never put pen to page, this is a day—in the spirit of Mary’s faith and fearlessness—for patience and possibility, for interiority and expression. Read more about this offering by Allison Seas, associate for religion and the arts, at ststephensRAVA.org/AdventRetreat.

There is no charge for this offering, but registration is required.

A warm welcome can change someone’s day
NOVEMBER 17, 6 P.M.

A smile, a handshake, a warm “Good morning” may be the most important ministry someone receives on a Sunday morning here at St. Stephen’s. If you would like to learn more about serving as an usher for the 11:15 a.m. service and discern whether it is a ministry to which you may be called, please come to a session in the church on November 17 at 6 p.m. Current ushers are encouraged to attend, as well.

Questions: Gene LeCouteur, glecouteur@ststephensRAVA.org, or 804.288.2867.

Make your life an offering: become a pledging member of this parish

Each of us has the opportunity to take our everyday lives and place them before God as an offering—a form of thanksgiving for all we have received from God. There is so much to be done, and none of us can do it alone. Through the church, we do God’s work together. As a pledging member of St. Stephen’s Church, you take part in a remarkable community of faith that provides the “hands and feet” of God in Richmond and beyond. Packets with information and pledge cards have been distributed to all on our parish mailing list. If you are not on the mailing list but want to take part, please do! Many people who are not members of St. Stephen’s (including those who are members of other churches) are eager to support our ministries. You may use our online pledge form (ststephensRAVA.org/pledge), or stop by any of the Welcome Tables to pick up a pledge card.

If you have not turned in a pledge card or made a pledge online at this point, please do it today. Thank you!

You’re invited to hear guest speakers visiting ‘Just Mercy’ group

The discussion series on Bryan Stevenson’s book Just Mercy includes several guest speakers, and even if you are not taking part in the series, you are invited to attend to hear those speakers, including:

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 7 P.M. // MICHAEL HERRING AND ALFRED DURHAM

JUST MERCY AND RICHMOND: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

As Commonwealth’s Attorney for Richmond, Michael Herring is responsible for prosecution of felonies committed in the city. As Chief of Police, Alfred Durham is the city’s chief law enforcement officer.

Both men have been recognized for their commitment to improving the criminal justice system and its relationships with the community. Parishioner and attorney Craig Merritt will welcome our two speakers and moderate a Q&A session with them after their initial remarks.

Women’s Forum focuses on pastoral care
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 10 A.M.

The November Women’s Forum will feature a presentation by Muffy Newell of Trinity Episcopal Church in Staunton. She will tell her own story and explain how it evolved into pastoral ministry for her church. Come at 9:30 a.m. for coffee and conversation; the program begins at 10. All are welcome, including men, and no registration is required.

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MORE AT STSTEPHENSRA.ORG/CALENDAR

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Holy Eucharist: Rite One, 8 a.m.
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Sunday school, Forum (Paul Wallace), parent group, Bible study, 10:10 a.m.*
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Bible Study, 10:30 a.m.
Evensong, 5:30 p.m.
Chi Kung, 6 p.m.
Dave Lucas poetry reading, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4
Morning Prayer and Communion, 8:10 a.m., online, fellowship follow
Stitches groups, 9 a.m.
Evensong, 5:30 p.m.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5
Farmers Market, 9 a.m.-noon
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Lunch with the rector
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, NOON
If you are new to St. Stephen’s or to the Episcopal Church, welcome! Several times during the year, we hold informal gatherings with our rector, Gary Jones, to give you the opportunity to meet him and the staff, to learn more about this parish, and to ask any questions you may have. We love this opportunity to welcome you personally and to know how we can better serve you in a low-key setting. The next gathering is a luncheon on November 17. To RSVP for this offering, please send an email to Janet Allen at jallen@ststephensRVA.org, call the parish office at 804.288.2867, or register online at ststephensRVA.org/newcomer-gatherings.

Writing a reflection for Advent or The Spirit
Each week in this newsletter, we publish a reflection from a parishioner or staff member who writes about the spiritual in everyday life. Would you like to write a reflection for The Spirit? Please send an email to Sarah Bartenstein, director of communications, sbartenstein@ststephensRVA.org, to request submission guidelines.

In addition, during the Advent season, St. Stephen’s distributes daily meditations by email to any who wish to subscribe. If you would like to write an Advent reflection, please ask Sarah for those guidelines as well. The deadline for submission of Advent meditations is November 10.

A pre-holiday event in May Fair House
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 10 A.M.-3 P.M.
May Fair House, the gift shop run by the Women of St. Stephen’s, will host a pre-holiday bazaar in and around the shop featuring holiday merchandise and gifts, May Fair House pies and other goodies, and the opportunity to order fresh magnolia wreaths. Special vendors, discounts, a raffle, and more are on tap. Pick up a flyer at Information Central or in the May Fair House for additional details, and help spread the word. Remember that proceeds from the May Fair House fund outreach grants selected by the Women of St. Stephen’s.

Advent is coming
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 27
The beginning of Advent (and a new church year) is just a month away. The Advent Fair will take place November 27 during the education hour (10:10-11) and after the 11:15 service until 1 p.m. This intergenerational event will offer activities and resources for all ages on the second floor of the parish hall—including making a fresh green Advent wreath. The Advent Fair is free; a $10 suggested donation for Advent wreath kits (oasis wreath forms, candles and candle holders) covers our costs for those items.

Do you have evergreen trees or shrubs that need trimming? Please consider bringing greens to share. More details coming soon!

It’s not too early to visit the Bookshop at St. Stephen’s to select a book from our excellent selection of Advent reading. The shop will also have Advent calendars soon.

A weekly meditation
THANKSGIVING THRU CHRISTMAS
Why are we so intent on being busy? What has happened to our lives that simply being is not enough? Are we predisposed to busyness? When I was a child I could be left on my own and watch the clouds, I could enjoy being still. Now if I want to do that, I have to make an appointment. We have responsibilities, of course, but isn’t one of them to be quiet and daydream, or listen to the birds, or watch the wind ruffle the leaves of the trees, to commune with God, nature, and the universe?

Being busy certainly fills the time. It makes me feel productive and virtuous (no hours wasted). It helps me feel like I fit in with society. “Go, go, go, Do, do, do,” as a friend used to say. Going and doing aren’t wrong by any means, but we need time for being, as well. We need time to recharge. We need time to rest. We need calm and silence to give the voice of God a chance to break through. I wonder if that is why God lit the burning bush. Perhaps Moses was so busy running away from the Egyptians and hearing Jethro’s sheep that God had to create a miracle to get his attention.

What miracle is God working to get our attention? Are we missing it because of our tunnel vision of “Go, go, go. Do, do, do”? How might our lives be richer and healthier if we took time for stillness? Do I want to be remembered as the guy who never stopped or the one who lived life beyond the phone, the calendar, and the hustle? I think I will take the former. God’s peace is the better portion.

The Better Portion
GENE LECLERCOURT

In today’s Forum: Paul Wallace
In today’s Forum Paul Wallace will explore one of the strangest accounts of creation in scripture: the divine monotheism of Job 38-41. In these chapters, in response to the poor man’s plea for justice, God takes Job on a wild, wooly, and very unexpected tour of creation. Job’s cosmos stands in accord with certain aspects of scientific thought; it values experience over tradition, offers a radical critique of conventional views of God, and removes human beings from the center of all things. These similarities make the Book of Job a promising point of departure for those who seek dialogue between Jewish and Christian religious traditions and modern science.

Paul Wallace teaches in the Department of Physics & Astronomy at Agnes Scott College and is ordained in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He also teaches occasionally at Emory University’s Candler School of Theology and at Columbia Theological Seminary. He holds a PhD in nuclear physics from Duke University and an MDiv from Emory. He is the author of Stared Beneath Us: Finding God in the Evolving Cosmos, available for purchase this morning.

Other Sunday offerings
In addition to the Sunday Forums, adults have the following options during the Christmas education hour, neither requiring registration: in Room 14, “Many Parents, One Vine,” especially for parents; in the Somerset Room (the former vestry room), Bible study led by the Rev. Penny Nash.

Remembering loved ones on All Saints’ Day
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1, NOON
All Saints’ Day is a major feast of the church year. Many of us are accustomed to thinking of “saints” as people of extraordinary virtue, but in the earliest days of the church, all baptized Christians were referred to as saints. On All Saints’ Day, we are especially mindful of “the communion of saints” and the eternal reality that those who have died are very much alive in God. As we draw close to God, we are never far from loved ones who have died. If you have a loved one you would like remembered during Tuesday’s All Saints’ Day service and you have not already contacted Betsy Lee in the parish office, please email her today (blee@ststephensRVA.org), or call 804.288.2867 first thing Monday morning.

Welcome, Heidi and Monica!
Our missionaries, Heidi Schmidt and Monica Vega, have been here for the past week, and will be with us until Wednesday. Heidi and Monica began a new ministry in Argentina last summer after serving in Brazil for several years. We are so blessed to have them among us!