

The Scroll

Fall 2024

RECEIVE, REFLECT, AND RELAY CHRIST

St. Stephen's



United Methodist Church

9203 Braddock Road • Burke VA, 22015

703-978-8724 • ststephensfairfax.org

On The Move

Each Sunday this summer, Pastor Minoo and I preached on the theme of “movement” in that the People of God are People of Movement. We explored how God moves and our response to that activity, particularly regarding grace and justice. We considered ways we can move in response to the changes around us. We talked about how we move as God’s people in a world that needs God’s grace. And while movement as God’s people has always been true, we find ourselves in a period of history that is seeing great change occurring rapidly. This calls the Church and the people of God to be open to more movement than recent generations. Movement doesn’t mean that we change the message, the Good News, or the mission to make disciples of Jesus Christ; those are non-negotiables in my mind. But it does call us to consider how we might adapt our methods.

Embracing change and adapting our methods often leads us into unfamiliar territory. My article in the previous edition of *The Scroll* focused on the times in between “what is” and “what will be”, also known as liminal space. It’s the bridge to the new that helps us to transition from the old. And we are still in that “in-between” state. That “in-between” state is often uncomfortable, as it is unfamiliar. We understand that it can be challenging and that it has us yearning for the “old things” since they were known, but let’s not forget the potential of the “new things.”

My father commuted from Dale City to Washington, D.C., for nearly twenty years. No one would love that amount of daily travel, fighting the infamous DC traffic; he was no different. What bothered him the most was that to address the increasing volume of traffic, the “powers-that-be” were approving road “improvements” designed to meet the current situation. Which, in reality, meant that before they ever broke ground on a new project, they were already behind. Their plan was for yesterday, in actuality, rather than really planning for tomorrow.

For most, the church looks vastly different than the one many of you knew before the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020.



This stands as a reminder to me that change is inevitable, both on the highways and in the life of the Church. And rather than looking longingly at the past, we can embrace it as an opportunity for growth and renewal, faithfully adapting to meet the needs of a new day.

Here at St. Stephen's UMC, we find ourselves in unfamiliar territory. For most, the church looks vastly different than the one many of you knew before the COVID-19 pandemic that began in 2020.

And there are many reasons for that. But regardless of the why, here we are. And while the temptation is to hold onto old things or try to return to previous ways, we miss out on the opportunities to meet tomorrow's possibilities of sharing the Good News to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Rest assured, our commitment to this message and mission remains steadfast. We look ahead with renewed hope as we adapt our methods to spread the Gospel.

Unfortunately, none of us have all the answers, but what we do have is the desire to share this message and continue this mission. Working together, discerning God's will and way, and planning each next step accordingly, we will be moving forward rather than looking backward. I am deeply grateful for your resilience and adaptability during these challenging times. I invite you to join me in prayerfully discerning God's will for our church and actively participating in the ministries that will help us move forward together.

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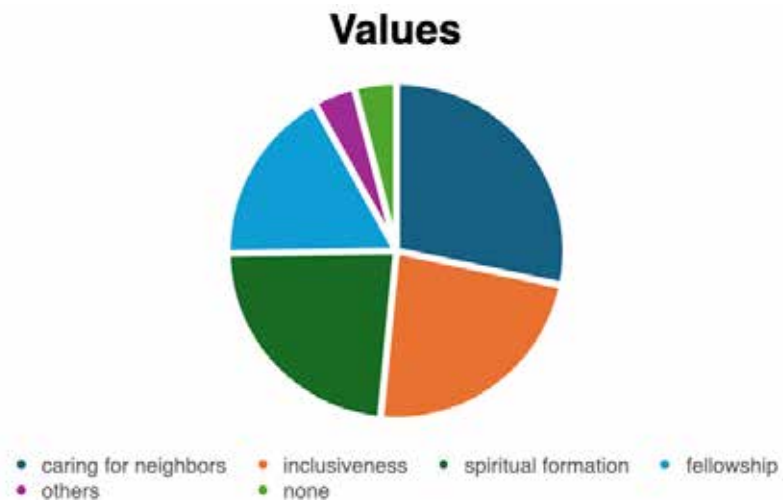
Grace and Peace to you,

Pastor Spencer

Outreach Survey

Thank you so much for your participation in the Outreach Congregational Survey throughout the summer. At the beginning of July, we launched this effort, asking each of you to share two values based on your favorite memories of “being the church.” As of September 1, we have officially closed the survey period with 130 submissions (equating to 260 values!). I spent an entire day carefully reviewing your responses—not just your values, but also your testimonies, suggestions, and ideas. I want to express my deep appreciation and gratitude for taking the time to share your stories with us in this meaningful way.

While the Outreach Taskforce team will review the data in more detail in the coming weeks, I wanted to provide you with a quick update on my initial categories:



1. 28% of the values fell under the category of “caring for neighbors” (serving the least of these, community engagement, outreach., etc.)
2. 23% under the category of “inclusiveness” (openness, welcoming, acceptance, etc.).
3. 23% under the category of “spiritual formation” (worship, discipleship, education for all ages, etc.)
4. 17% under the category of “fellowship” (friendship, community, connection, congregational care, recreation, etc.)

I want to emphasize that these are my initial classifications, and the data may be interpreted differently depending on the categorization methods we use. We will continue to keep you updated on the survey results and how we plan to use this data to shape our outreach ministry and other initiatives in the coming months. So, please stay tuned!

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Minoa

Crop Hunger Walk

Join the St. Stephen's Team for the Burke/Fairfax CROP Hunger Walk on Sunday, November 3, 1:45 to 3:30 pm. St. Stephen's members have supported the walk since 2002, and the church is recognized as one of the leading groups in terms of participants and funds raised.

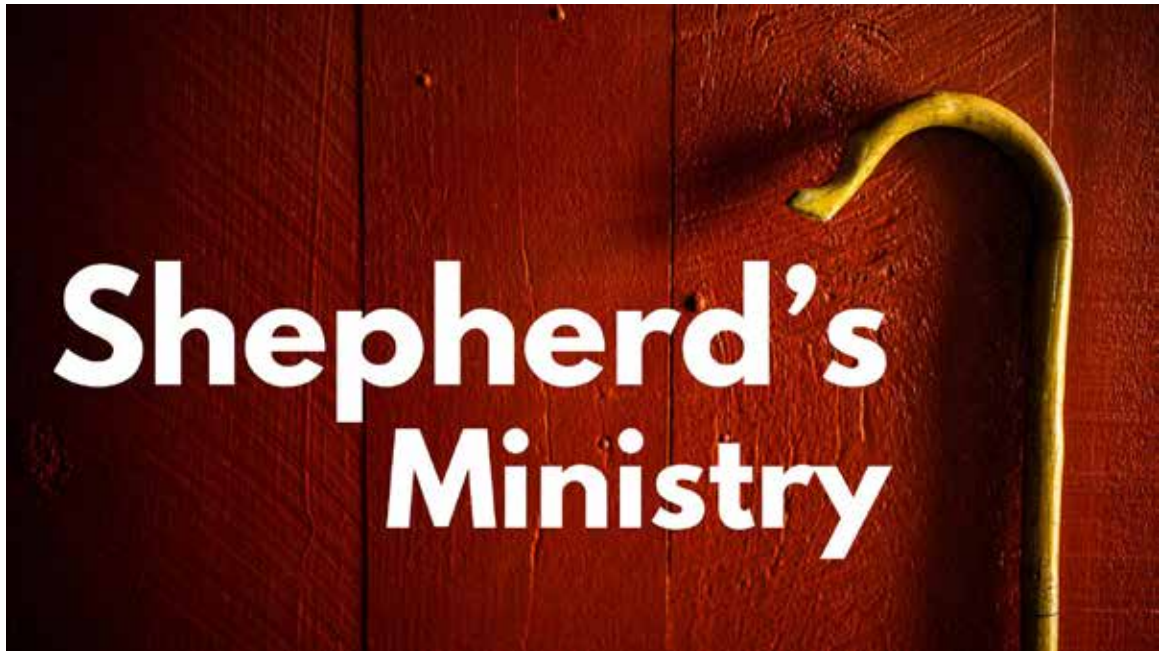
CROP Hunger Walks are held throughout the country to raise attention to global hunger issues and to raise money for food for those in need. Funds from the Burke/Fairfax walk are distributed locally through ECHO and Western Fairfax Christian Ministries, and globally through Church World Services food distribution organizations.

The CROP hunger Walk is a family-friendly event, fun for all ages. The walk starts and ends at Burke Presbyterian Church and covers 3.6 miles, the average distance a woman or young girl in parts of Africa and Asia walks every day to collect water. Strollers and wagons and dogs on leashes are welcome! Water and light refreshments will be provided.

Learn more about the walk at <http://www.burkecropwalk.org/>

or contact the church office or Cathy Liverman (cathyliverman@gmail.com) (571-331-9430). Thanks!!





Would you like to carry the love of Christ into the world? One way is to become a member of the Shepherd's Ministry Communion Care Team that serves communion to members of the congregation in their homes. Opportunities to serve occur on the first Sunday of each month after worship services.

Are you a member of the congregation who is unable to attend worship services in person and would like to receive communion in your home? The Shepherd's Ministry Care Team would be happy to provide pre-packaged elements or to serve you communion in your home.

If you would like to learn more about serving or receiving at-home communion, please send an email to the Shepherd's Ministry Care Teams at: shepherdcareteam@ststephensfairfax.org, write "at-home communion" on your connect card, or call the church office and say you are interested in at-home communion.



Children's Ministries

MPK and SHINE: Pizza, Friends, Service

Join us each month from
**6:00-8:00 p.m. on these
dates:**

- September 13
- October 11
- November 8
- December 13
- January 10
- February 14 (3 hour Parent's Night Out Event)
- March 14
- April 11
- May 9 (MPK only)



- Use the Fellowship Hall Doors -

Check-out our new Sunday morning program, BLAST, each week at 11:00 a.m.

Save these upcoming Children's Ministry dates:

Trunk or Treat: October 19, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

If you are interested in bringing a car and handing out candy,
contact Devin: children@ststepensfairfax.org

Advent Festival with a Pop-UP Christmas Pageant:

December 7, 2:00 p.m.

Walk Through Bethlehem with a Living Nativity:

December 20, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Church and Society

Please plan to visit the Church and Society committee's table at the church picnic and Ministry Fair. Learn more about the Social Principles presentations that are being offered throughout the fall and take an opportunity to register for The CROP Hunger Walk that will occur on the afternoon of Sunday, November 3 along Burke Center Parkway. St. Stephen's members have supported this effort to alleviate food insecurity locally and globally since 2002. If you are not interested in walking the 3.6 miles, you can still support the effort by pledging a donation to those who are walking.

In cooperation with the Children's Ministry and Grace Ministries, we are collecting gently used Halloween costumes to distribute to children who need a costume. So, if your child has outgrown their costume or picked a new super hero for this year, please bring the clean and serviceable costumes to the picnic. They will be distributed through Grace Ministries and other agencies as needed.

The Church and Society Committee is always recruiting, so please consider joining the committee as we seek to live out God's calling in the world and promote Justice and Peace.

Halloween Costume Donations for Grace Ministries

TRICK
OR
TREAT



Please bring new or gently used
costumes to the Gathering
Place box by September 23

Members at Play



The Bairds on the open water...



The Gladises enjoyed the Chautauqua Institute this summer for the third time



Former and current members of Sharing & Caring Sunday School Class are enjoying time together on a Riverboat Cruise from Pittsburgh to St Louis on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers.

L/R-Linwood Hoffman, Jerry Taylor, Jean Taylor, Kathy Hoffman, Glen Bottoms, & Suzanne Bottoms.



The Platenkamps had a wedding!

Discernment

Friends:

For the last year we have been in conversation around developments in the larger United Methodist Church around human sexuality. We've updated you as a significant portion of churches left the UMC over the issue, and as the General Conference voted, by large margins, to remove prohibitions against gay marriage and ordination. We've heard your thoughts in larger church-wide meetings and smaller listening groups.

The biggest message we've gotten out of these meetings is that St. Stephen's is seeking closure on this issue. Our pastors have counseled that the task before us is one of discernment: Where is God calling St. Stephen's in its ministry here in the center of Fairfax County?

As we have prayerfully considered this question in light of our conversations with the congregation, it is our perception that God may be calling St. Stephen's towards a more inclusive stance on gay marriage and ordination. There is respected scholarship that provides biblical and theological grounding for this view.

The Church Council has guided the process over the past year, and at the July meeting, it



approved a discernment process that centers around a draft inclusive statement, which is printed at the end of this document. Over the coming weeks Ed, Lesley, and Ebenezer will be holding listening sessions to hear what you think about the statement. In addition to the dates scheduled below, they would be happy to attend a meeting of any small group that invites them. Rather than "line editing sessions" on the draft statement, we envision

these meetings as opportunities to hear whether the statement generally describes where you believe God is leading St. Stephen's.

On September 22nd, Rev. Jeff Mickle, former Senior Pastor of St. Stephen's and recently retired District Superintendent, will be joining us in person to provide biblical and theological background around the issue of gay marriage and ordination.

After the listening sessions are complete, the Church Council will hold a special meeting by mid-November in which it will consider whether to adopt a statement on LGBTQ issues. Based on the feedback we hear, this could be the statement below as drafted, a revision of this draft, or one that takes us in a different direction, wherever God leads us.

Where is God calling St. Stephen's in its ministry here in the center of Fairfax County?

“But anyone who needs wisdom should ask God, whose very nature is to give to everyone without a second thought, without keeping score. Wisdom will certainly be given to those who ask.” James 1:5 (CEB). We ask that the entire congregation lift St. Stephen’s up in prayer during this season of discernment, asking for wisdom to see the path that God has laid before us. The church sanctuary will be open from 7-8 pm every Wednesday night from September 25th to October 30th for those who wish to pray for the church as it considers this question.

Grace and Peace,

Lesley Hatch
Co-Lay Leader

Ebenezer Dadzie
Co-Lay Leader

Ed Baird, Chair
Church Council

Lorac Lawton, Chair
Ministry Council

Rev. Spencer Broce
Senior Pastor

Rev. Minoo Kim
Associate Pastor



Draft Statement

We believe:

- That all persons are created in God’s image and are part of God’s plan;
- That all people fall short of the life God intends;
- That by faith in Jesus Christ all can find wholeness and salvation; and
- That through God’s grace and participation in the life of the church all grow in the faithfulness and likeness of Christ.

Therefore, we welcome all persons, whatever their gender, abilities, ethnicity, the color of their skin, or whom they love, to fully participate in all ministries of the church as they are gifted, called, or enabled.

Schedule of Sessions

- Teaching Session:
 - Rev. Jeff Mickle, Sunday, September 22, at 1 pm. **Please RSVP by September 18 to office@ststephensfairfax.org and indicate if you will need childcare**
- Listening Sessions:
 - Thursday, September 26, 7:30 pm
 - Sunday, October 6, 12:30 pm
 - Wednesday, October 16, 7:30 pm
- Self-led Prayer Sessions
 - Wednesday, September 25, 7-8 pm
 - Wednesday, October 2, 7-8 pm
 - Wednesday, October 9, 7-8 pm
 - Wednesday, October 16, 7-8 pm
 - Wednesday, October 23, 7-8 pm
 - Wednesday, October 30, 7-8 pm
- Special Church Council meeting, TBD



Youth Ministries

Celebrating Our Youth Ministry

It's been a hot summer, but youth group has still been full steam ahead! We'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and share our joy with you. Our youth are engaged in spiritual and interpersonal journeys, and you're why we can provide a space for that to happen. Have a look at what we did this summer!



Summer Mission Trip: Jeremiah Project

Things started off with a BIG week for our youth and chaperones at Jeremiah Project. Our annual service project to West Virginia provides intense worship, labor, and bonding opportunities that make a lasting impression on our youth. Our youth built entire decks and ramps this time, and some of them gave themselves to Christ for the first time! Jeremiah Project is a vital part of our youth ministry and this year's was no exception.



Kings Dominion Adventure

Three chaperones escorted five brave youth through the wild iron forest of roller coasters and thrill-inducing gizmos at one of the most well-known amusement parts in the country! We had loads of fun, were able to ride almost everything we wanted to, and even enjoyed the car rides there and back with some fun driving games. The severe thunderstorms looming overhead avoided us until the very end of the day, where we took shelter moments before the sky opened up in a torrential downpour. Definitely a day to remember!

Annandale UMC Dodgeball Tournament

Last year we won the regional cohort dodgeball tournament and brought home a massive trophy that we've displayed in our youth room all year. It's time for us to return it to the podium, but we're prepared to defend our champion title and bring it back this year too! Be sure to share words of encouragement with the youth to do their best.



As we reflect on the success of our youth ministry, we are grateful for the support of our church community. Your encouragement and involvement have been instrumental in creating a nurturing environment where our youth can grow spiritually and socially.

Blessings and joy,

St. Stephen's Youth Ministry Team

St. Stephen's Youth Group

Our mission is to connect youth to a loving environment that fosters a relationship with God and our neighbors. All 7th-12th graders are warmly invited to join us. We meet on Sunday evenings from 5:30-7:00 (unless otherwise noted) in the youth room at St. Stephens.

2024 FALL SCHEDULE

- Sept. 8 Kick-Off
- Sept. 15 Service Project (Trunk or Treat Planning)
- Sept. 22 Fun!
- Sept. 29 Creative Fun with Betty B
- Oct. 6 Faith with Pastor Spencer
- Oct. 13 No Youth Group (Indigenous People's Day)
- Oct. 19 Trunk or Treat Service Project (2-4 pm)
- Oct. 20 Fun!
- Oct. 27 Creative Fun with Betty B
- Nov. 3 Faith with Pastor Minoo
- Nov. 10 No Youth Group (Veteran's Day)
- Nov. 17 Service Project (College Student Care Package Prep)
- Nov. 24 Friendsgiving
- Dec. 1 No Youth Group (End of Thanksgiving Break)
- Dec. 8 Faith with Pastor Minoo
- Dec. 15 Christmas Party

For questions, please contact Associate Pastor Minoo Kim at pastorminoo@ststephensfairfax.org or Youth Ministry Council Chair Wendy Baird at wendybaird@verizon.net.



Are you passionate about working with teenagers?

Are you looking to make a difference in their lives? We're seeking dedicated volunteers for our youth ministry programs this fall. With opportunities ranging from teaching Sunday School to helping with Sunday night youth groups, your commitment can be as little as twice a month. If you feel called to support building up our youth community, we would love to have you join us! Please contact Pastor Minoo or Wendy Baird for more information.



Save the Dates: September

We are excited to announce the restart of various programs and events for the new school year. Please save the following dates:

September 3: Maranatha

September 5: St. Stephen's Choir

September 8: Beginning of Adult & Youth Sunday Schools (10 am)
Intro to Revised Social Principles (10 am)
Children's Blast Sunday School (11 am)
Youth Group (5:30 pm)

September 13: MPK/Shine

September 15: Fall Picnic & Ministry Fair (noon)

September 22: Rev. Jeff Mickle Presentation (1 pm)

September 23: Strings Ensemble (6:30 pm)

September 27: Monthly Concert Series: Classical (7 pm)

St. Stephen's Women's Retreat

Saturday, October 5

11:30 to 4:30 pm

St. Stephen's Welcome Center and beyond

Come and Enjoy Fellowship, Food, Fun, and Worship!

Please Invite Friends!



United
Women
in Faith

Spouses and all are welcome at 3:00 for the message and communion.

- **Cost:** \$30, which allows the ticket holder to invite one person to the 3:00 p.m. worship and dessert for free.

Tentative Agenda:

- 11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.: Chair Yoga (optional)
- 12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.: Lunch in the Welcome Center with Music
- 1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.: Spiritual Worship Service Project Craft
- 3:00 p.m.: Pastor Melissa Dunlop will provide the message and share communion with us (ALL WELCOME).

Followed by desserts in the Gathering Space for all.

Mission Donation: Feminine pads for distribution at Grace Ministries.

Child Care: Free but must be reserved by 9/30 – please contact the office to reserve.





MUSIC CONCERT Schedule

ST.STEPHEN'S



Sep. 27

CLASSICAL CONCERT
7:00 PM

Oct. 25

GAMING CONCERT
AND VIDEO GAMES
6:00 PM

Nov. 15

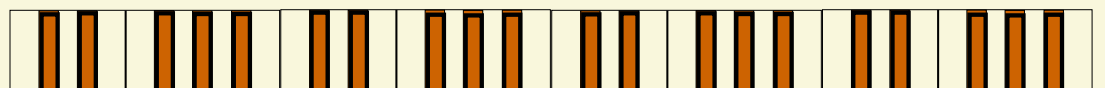
HYMN SING
7:00 PM



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