



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

**SAINT STEPHEN'S**

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Open Hearts • Open Hands • Open Doors

## **Fall 2023 Adult Learning Program Guide**

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## Daily Office Reflections and Online Morning Prayer Services

### Daily Office Reflections

Three days per week, Saint Stephen's clergy write original theological reflections in response to the scripture readings appointed for each day. These reflections are posted on the church website at <https://www.ssechurch.org/daily-reflections> and may be subscribed to as a daily email (sign-up through this same link). Besides the reflection itself, links to the scriptures, questions for reflection, and a daily challenge are included.

### Morning Prayer

Each day at 8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday, [we gather together on Facebook and Vimeo](#) to read scriptures and pray following the Rite II service for Morning Prayer found in our *Book of Common Prayer*. Led by Saint Stephen's clergy and lay leaders, this prayer service includes space for community members to greet one another and share prayer requests in the comments.

## Inquirers' Class: The Episcopal Way of Faith

Sunday mornings: 10:15-11:00 a.m. in Room 229 and Zoom

Begins September 10; runs through the end of October.

The Rev. John Burruss will lead an "Introduction to the Faith" to those interested in learning more about the Episcopal Church. If you need a refresher or you are new to the church, this class will give you the tools to understand and navigate the Episcopal Church. All who participate will have the opportunity to be confirmed, received, or to affirm their faith at the next Bishop's visit on November 5, 2023. [You may register on Realm here](#). If you do not have access to Realm, email [John@ssechurch.org](mailto:John@ssechurch.org) to register.

## Faith & Life for Parents of Young Children

Sunday mornings: 10:15-11:00 a.m. in Room 228

Weekly gatherings begin September 10.

The Faith & Life small group at Saint Stephen's is comprised of parents of young children. Those who come are looking to connect with others experiencing the joys and challenges of parenthood. The group gathers weekly to share stories, reflect on Bible readings, reflect theologically on issues in parenting, while building prayerful community and welcoming space for laughter and solidarity. Please email the Rev. Katherine Harper at [katherine@ssechurch.org](mailto:katherine@ssechurch.org) for more information.

# Saint Stephen's Sunday Forum

Sundays, 10:15-11:05 a.m., in the Parish Hall and on YouTube

We host speakers on a range of topics that enhance our spiritual life and sense of purpose and community. A link to each week's forum can be found in our weekly e-news, and [past forums are archived on our YouTube channel](#). More details may be found here: <https://www.ssechurch.org/sundayforum>

September 10	"Stories of Faith, Hope, and Love: Faith, Psychology, and Action," Robert Elsner, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Samford University
September 17	"23 Years of Service to the HIV/LGBTQ Community: Stories of Resilience and Love," Karen Musgrove, Ph.D., Birmingham AIDS Outreach
September 24	"Abraham's Faith?" Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University
October 1	"A Wedding at Sinai," Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University
October 8	Fall Break/No Formation
October 15	"Be the Light: Embracing the Spirituality of Giving," Pat Bills, St. Stephen's Minister for Stewardship and Development; Claire Cotten, Diocese of Alabama Director of Mission Funding
October 22	"Discovering Our Stories in Sacred Story" (Part 1), the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan and Elizabeth VanderKamp
October 29	"Discovering Our Stories in Sacred Story" (Part 2), the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan and Elizabeth VanderKamp
November 5	"Storied Revelations: Making Our Home in God's Story," Gisela Kreglinger, Ph.D.
November 12	Consecration Sunday Reception/No Formation
November 19	"Stories of Cahaba Critters," Wil Ranier, Cahaba River Society
November 26	Thanksgiving Weekend/No Formation
December 3	Annual Meeting
December 10	"Discovering Our Stories in Sacred Story" (Part 3), the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan and Elizabeth VanderKamp

## **Tuesday Morning Men's Bible Study**

Meets Tuesdays, 7:00-8:00 a.m., Room 228 and on Zoom (year-round).

We gather every Tuesday morning to discuss the Scripture lessons for the upcoming Sunday. We discuss a book chosen by the group during the summer months. The class is facilitated by a volunteer from the group each week. All men are encouraged to join us for fellowship, fun, and helping each other on our spiritual journey. Please contact Tom Robertshaw for more information or for a Zoom link.

## **Tuesday Morning Women's Contemplating Christ Circle**

Meets Tuesdays, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m., in the Terrace Room.

First meeting is September 12; last meeting for fall is December 5.

(We will not meet on October 10 or November 21.)

The Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan will facilitate a weekly gathering for a small group of women who will reflect upon the Rev. Dr. Vincent Pizzuto's book *Contemplating Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life*. The group will also experience various contemplative prayer practices and share how the book and practices intersect with their own lives. In order to facilitate group cohesiveness, space is limited and registration is required. Please contact Mary Bea ([marybea@marybeasullivan.com](mailto:marybea@marybeasullivan.com)) to register. Your registration will be confirmed when received.

## **Tuesday Lunch with the Rector Reading Group**

Meets Tuesdays, 12:10-1:00 p.m. on Zoom. Year-round.

The class will be an essay reading class led by the Rev. John Burruss.

**August and September** (begins August 15): Excerpts from *Letters and Papers from Prison* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

**October:** *Lost Antarctica* by Jim McClintock

**November:** *Life Worth Living: A Guide to What Matters Most* by Miroslav Volf, Matthew Croasmun, and Ryan McAnnally-Linz

**December:** *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox, and the Horse* by Charlie Mackesy (first three Tuesdays in the month, guest facilitated by the Rev. Katherine Harper)

Each book will be broken into segments to read at the first class of the month. Any edition or copy will work. If the cost of a book is a burden, scholarships are available. The group is listed on Realm as "Rector's Reading Group." If you don't have Realm yet, email [John@ssechurch.org](mailto:John@ssechurch.org) to register.

## **Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study**

Begins September 13. Meets Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 a.m., Room 228 and on Zoom.  
Facilitated by Virginia Hillhouse.

We will begin the year studying the books of Isaiah. Come see what you think. Please contact Virginia Hillhouse for more information. Contact Janet Robertshaw for the Zoom link.

## **Wednesday Morning Centering Prayer**

Meets year-round, Wednesdays, 10:00-11:15 a.m. (Chapel)  
Facilitated by Louise Meredith.

Centering Prayer is a practice of prayer that is simple, restful, and easy to understand. The length of time recommended is 20 minutes. It is a silent prayer, practiced individually and/or in a group. Following prayer, we discuss a book together. To learn more, contact Louise Meredith.

Note: On the first Wednesdays of the month, there is no meeting at Saint Stephen's. Volunteers meet with the residents at Kirkwood by the River from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

## **Wednesday Night Live**

Begins September 6. Wednesdays, 5:00-8:30 p.m.  
This fall, we will host a Parish Dinner every Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m., in the Parish Hall.

Note: Formation programs and small groups will not be held on Sept. 6, Oct. 4, Oct. 25, Nov. 15, and Dec. 13 due to special intergenerational events that will run from 5:00-6:30 p.m.

Details on each of the adult formation groups follow on page 6 of this program guide, while details on children's, youth, and music programs are in their respective program guides.

5:00-7:00	Nursery Open
5:15-6:00	Children's, Youth, and Adult Formation Programs Children's Program (Children's Choir Room, Room 143) Club 56 (Carpenter Hall) 10 <sup>th</sup> -11 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> grade small group (Carpenter Hall) Women's Bible Study: Ten Women of the Bible (Terrace Room) Men's Bible Study (228) Rule of Life Small Group: Tuning Our Hearts to the Rhythm of Christ (Chapel) Folk Music Group (Nave)
5:30-6:30	Dinner (Parish Hall)
6:00-7:00	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> -9 <sup>th</sup> grade small group (at Chick-Fil-A on Crosshaven)
6:30-7:30	Young Adults Bible Study (228)
7:15-8:30	Adult Choir practice (Nave)

## **Wednesday Evening Women's Bible Study**

Begins September 13. Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00 p.m. (Terrace Room)

Facilitated by Jessica Garrison.

A great time to be in community as we seek the heart of God together. The lesson stands alone each week. No previous experience with the Bible is necessary. Childcare is available. In September, we'll begin a study of *Ten Women of the Bible: One by One They Changed the World* (by Max Lucado and Jenna Lucado Bishop). Find the book here: <https://a.co/d/j8py6OH>

In this study, we will learn about women in scripture and the remarkable way God broke down cultural barriers to use them in the unfolding of his story. These stories show us there is a God who sees us where we are and loves us for who we are. He is the one who hovers over all the pages of the Bible, shaping lives, rescuing hearts, healing sicknesses, raising what was dead to life, and passing out high callings to those who choose to follow him and have faith in him.

## **Wednesday Evening 'Rule of Life' Small Group: Tuning Our Hearts to the Rhythm of Christ**

Begins September 13, meets Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00 p.m. (Chapel)

Facilitated by the Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan.

In each chapter of our life, we have unique limitations placed on our time and our resources. As we strive to live lives of meaning and purpose, we are challenged to balance time for prayer, family, vocations, and for tending to our physical and emotional well-being. The Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan will facilitate a conversation that will center on participants exploring various "Rules of Life" that have helped Christians keep Christ at the center of how to spend their "one wild and precious life" (Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day"). There will be an emphasis on compassionate self-awareness, community members supporting one another, and each person creating his or her own Rule/Rhythm of Life.

## **Wednesday Evening Men's Bible Study**

Begins August 17, Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00 p.m. (228)

Facilitated by the Reverend John Burruss

The group of men of all ages will discuss Scripture from the daily lectionary and from the upcoming Sunday. The group is listed as "Men's Bible Study, Wednesday Evening" and you can join there. If you don't have Realm yet, email [John@ssechurch.org](mailto:John@ssechurch.org) to register.

## **Wednesday Evening Young Adults Bible Study**

Begins September 13. Wednesday evenings, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

For more details, contact the Rev. John Burruss ([john@ssechurch.org](mailto:john@ssechurch.org)).

The Young Adults of Saint Stephen's are a group of 22- to 35-year-olds who gather weekly for fellowship and Bible study. The group will discuss Scripture from the daily lectionary and from the upcoming Sunday and is an open-ended discussion. Devout and skeptics alike are welcome to join. Please email the Rev. John Burruss at [john@ssechurch.org](mailto:john@ssechurch.org) for more information.

## **Thursday Afternoon Bible Study: Acts of the Apostles and Luke**

Meets Thursdays, 1:00-2:15 p.m. on Zoom.

Facilitated by the Rev. Katherine Harper.

This group of women and men meets on Thursdays from 1:00-2:15 p.m. via Zoom, with quarterly in-person meetings at Saint Stephen's. We are studying the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel according to Luke. Join us as we wander through these writings of the early church. Join us as we wrestle with questions faith, pray for one another, and listen for how God is calling us to follow Jesus today. Contact the Rev. Katherine Harper ([katherine@ssechurch.org](mailto:katherine@ssechurch.org)) for the Zoom link.

## **Good Grief: Grief Support Group**

Thursdays, September 28 through November 2, from 4:00-5:15 p.m.

This grief support group will be led by Cindy Wiley and the Rev. Katherine Harper. Those grieving a recent loss, life change, or death may enroll in this six-week commitment. During sessions, we will gather to share stories of grief, learn about the grieving process, and support one another through prayer. This is a registration event through Realm, with the maximum set at fifteen participants. More details will be forthcoming.

## **Thursday Evening Education for Ministry (EfM)**

Begins August 17 (meets August through May). Meets Thursdays, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Room 228.

Facilitated by Frank Holmes and Cheri Kueven, EfM Mentors.

Do you have questions about your faith? Most people do, and most find it challenging to get answers. Education for Ministry was developed by the School of Theology in Sewanee, Tennessee, to provide a mechanism for people to work through those questions. This four-year

course of study provides the framework for the group to connect faith to their daily lives through reading and discussion.

The terms “education” and “ministry” in Education for Ministry frequently need unpacking to better understand both the content and the purpose of the program. At its heart EfM is a program in practical theology, a program based in a set of five core practices that form and support us in the various ministries to which we are called: 1) Living in Community; 2) Regular Prayer and Worship; 3) Theological Reflection; 4) Study of the Christian Tradition; and 5) Vocational Discernment.

Meeting once a week in small groups, led by mentors trained to facilitate the experience, you will begin to think theologically, reflect faithfully, and speak civilly when confronted by beliefs and principles in opposition to your own. And that’s something we can all appreciate in today’s world. By being an EfM participant, you will learn how to articulate your faith. You will learn how to shape your faith into action. You will become involved in ministries in your community, and you will make a difference.

EfM participation requires a year-long commitment (September through May), including doing the required readings and writing and sharing theological reflections. A registration fee is required, but scholarship assistance is available. For more information, contact Frank Holmes or Cheri Kueven.

## **Friday Morning Paul’s Letters Bible Study Group**

Begins September 8. Meets Fridays. 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Zoom.

For Zoom link, email Verna Orr or see the weekly e-news.

Facilitated by Verna Orr.

Continuing our in-depth study of the Apostle Paul’s letters, we will continue working our way through 2 Corinthians. Members of the group share their verse-by-verse observations, based on reading a variety of translations of the scriptures (NRSV, ESV, NIV, the Message, and so on) as well as commentaries by such scholars as N.T. Wright, Michael Gorman, et al. For more information or the Zoom link, contact Verna Orr.

## **Cursillo**

Cursillo is a community of faith that is dedicated to exploring the love of God and sharing God's love with each other. Cursillo is an opportunity to grow in faith and in spirituality.

Cursillo in the Diocese of Alabama begins with a three-day weekend at Camp McDowell. During these three days, lay people and clergy share their experiences and perspective on a variety of topics related to the love of God, the Christian life, and Christian



community. Through Cursillo we seek a deeper understanding of the teachings of Jesus and how we can serve Him. We work together to share God's love and encourage each other to persevere in carrying out our Baptismal vows. Cursillo starts with a three-day weekend, but the best is yet to come!

Cursillo weekends take place five times each year at Camp McDowell. Weekends are scheduled in February, April, June, September, and October. To learn more or to sign up, contact Melody Eagan.

## **The Being With Course: Story Sharing and Reflection Group**

Dates and times for new Being With cohorts are to be determined soon.

To be added to the interest list, please email Kathy Graham ([kathy@ssechurch.org](mailto:kathy@ssechurch.org)).

*If you would like to learn more about whether this would be a good group for you, please contact one of our clergy or one of our Being With course facilitators, Andrea Pound or Kelly Love.*

### **We believe in significant relationships.**

Being With is about sharing stories about our lives and hearing the stories of others. These stories are the small things that mean a lot to us, and they can also be the most challenging and life-changing moments of our lives. There's a space for every person's life and story. We believe that to find the meaning of life we need each other. We need to spend time being present and attentive to others who may be different to us and to ourselves and the world around us. As we do this, we can discover a way to be attentive to God and discover that God is present to us. This is what Being With aims to do – to create the opportunity for this to happen.

### **Have you ever wondered...**

If all the meaning, beauty, and goodness you have found in life so far could help you discover something that holds it all together? If there is a God, wouldn't God be best discovered with others?

The Being With Course is an invitation to invest in becoming the type of person who knows how to be with yourself, others, and the world around us—and, through this, to be with God. It is an invitation to discover faith in the context of discovering friendship. The course tries to do what it says on the package. The heart of this course is that Being With is what God is all about so we've designed a course that should feel like that.

The course is run over 10 sessions, either online or in person covering topics like essence, story, community, suffering and hope. Each session holds space to hear the large and small stories that have made up your life and for you to listen to those of others, it then puts our stories in the context of a talk based in thinking from other cultures and times. There is no judgementalism, no wrong answers, and no proscribed path for you. Truth is only found as we learn how to be with.