



CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

SAINT STEPHEN'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Open Hearts • Open Hands • Open Doors

Spring 2023 Adult Learning Program Guide

To talk with someone about finding the best fit for your interests, please contact the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges (becky@ssechurch.org).

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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.

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](#). Speaker biographies and more detail may be found here: <https://www.ssechurch.org/sundayforum>

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| January 15 | "Washington, D.C.: A Center for Religious Pilgrimage," David Bains, Ph.D., Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University |
| January 22 | "A Pilgrim on Pilgrimage: The Holy Land's Allure in Ancient and Modern Times," James Strange, Ph.D., Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University |
| January 29 | "A Pilgrimage to the Heart," The Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan, Episcopal priest, retreat leader, and spiritual director |
| February 5 | "Strangers in a Strange Land: Pilgrimage as the Journey Back Home," Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Department of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University |
| February 12 | "Church on Pilgrimage," The Rev. John Burruss, Rector, Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church |
| February 19 | "Pilgrimage with Saint Paul: Journeying from our Destination," The Rev. Jonathan Linebaugh, Ph.D., Anglican Studies Program Director, Beeson Divinity School, Samford University |

February 26	"Racial Healing through Pilgrimage in Alabama," Breanna Mitchell, Missioner for Racial Healing and Pilgrimage, Episcopal Diocese of Alabama
March 5	"Walking Worship: Pilgrimages to Chartres and Taizé," Rob Elsner, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Samford University, and Betsy Elsner, M.L.S.
March 12	"Walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain," Janet Robertshaw and Tom Robertshaw
March 19	"To Be a Pilgrim: Discover the Society of Saint John the Evangelist," Brother Jim Woodrum, SSJE
March 26	Spring Break (no formation)
April 2	Palm Sunday (no formation)
April 9	Easter Sunday (no formation)
April 16	<i>Taxing the Sun</i> , Southern Exposures film screening with discussion facilitated by Michael Yancey, coordinator of Saint Stephen's solar panels project
April 23	<i>See Me in Nature</i> , Southern Exposures film screening with discussion facilitated by La'Tanya Scott, Education Specialist, Cahaba River Society
April 30	"Practical Tips to Prepare for Eternal Life," the Rev. Katherine Harper and our expert panel
May 7	<i>Our Hundred Year Floods</i> , Southern Exposures film screening with discussion (facilitator TBA)
May 14	<i>What about the Drinking Water?</i> , Southern Exposures film screening with discussion (facilitator TBA)

Sunday Morning Young Adults Small Group

Begins January 15. Meets Sundays, 10:15-11:00 a.m., in the Chapel.

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 for more information.

Sunday Afternoon Reflection Group: *Being With Church*

Meets January 15 through March 26, 3:00-4:30 p.m., Terrace Room.
Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges and Sandi Simmons.

This theological reflection group requires a 10-week commitment and pre-registration to participate. The Sunday afternoon cohort is a continuation for those who already completed *Being With* (level 1) in Fall 2022. These ten new sessions included in *Being With Church* allow us to wonder together about these themes: 1) Communion, 2) Prayer, 3) Bible, 4) Baptism, 5) Church, 6) Discipleship, 7) Ministry, 8) Mission, 9) Death, and 10) Money.

The *Being With* courses were developed by Rev. Dr. Sam Wells and Rev. Sally Hitchiner of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. The course is based around two principles. Both are convictions about God (theology) that translate into principles about our action (ethics). The first is about Jesus, the second about the Holy Spirit.

If you haven't yet participated in *Being With* (level 1), you should look into joining our Wednesday evening *Being With* cohort. Contact becky@ssechurch.org for details.

Tuesday Morning Men's Bible Study

Meets Tuesdays, 7:00-8:00 am, 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.

Tuesdays: Lunch with the Rector

Meets Tuesdays, 12:10-1:00 p.m. on Zoom. You may [sign up for the monthly email list here](#).
The group is a reading group led by the Rev. John Burruss.

January: *The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox* by Maggie O'Farrell (facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges)

February: *From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness, and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life* by Arthur Brooks

March: *The White Mosque: A Memoir* by Sofia Samatar

April: *Following Jesus in a Culture of Fear: Choosing Trust over Safety in an Anxious Age* by Scott Bader-Saye (facilitated by the Rev. Katherine Harper)

May: *The Way to Love: The Last Meditations of Anthony de Mello* by Anthony de Mello

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. Please email the Rev. John Burruss at john@ssechurch.org for more information.

Wednesday Morning Women's Bible Study

Begins January 11. Meets Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00 a.m., Room 228 and on Zoom.
Facilitated by Virginia Hillhouse.

We will begin the year studying the books of 1 and 2 Peter. 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. On the first Wednesday of each month, we meet at Kirkwood by the River at 10:30 a.m. On all other Wednesdays, we meet in the Chapel at Saint Stephen's. To learn more, contact Louise Meredith.

Wednesday Night Live

Begins January 11. Wednesdays, 4:00-8:30 p.m.

This spring, we will host a Parish Dinner every Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m., in the Parish Hall. Menu details will be announced in the weekly e-news.

Details on each of the adult formation groups follow on pages 6-8 of this program guide, while details on children's, youth, and music programs are in their respective program guides.

4:00-5:30	Knitting and Crocheting Group (Elevator Lobby/Porte Cochere entrance)
5:00-7:00	Nursery Open
5:15-6:00	Children's Program (Carpenter Hall), Club 56 (Carpenter Hall), Women's Bible Study (Terrace Room), Men's Bible Study (228), Parents in Conversation Group (229), and Folk Music Group (Chapel)
5:30-6:30	Dinner (Parish Hall)
5:15-6:45	<i>Being With</i> reflection group (Library)
6:00-7:00	Youth Small Groups
6:30-7:00	Lenten Series: March 1, 8, 15, 22 (Parish Hall)
7:15-8:30	Adult Choir practice (Nave)

Wednesday Evening Lenten Series

March 1, 8, 15, and 22, Wednesdays, 6:30-7:00 p.m. (Parish Hall)

Following our parish dinners on four evenings in Lent, we will linger to learn and share about hands-on spiritual practices to help us navigate the wilderness of life. Parishioners with expertise in the visual arts, writing, textile arts, and more will guide us in learning about these hands-on activities can be an integral part of our own spiritual lives and provide another avenue for deepening our faith in Christ. A children's Lenten program will be offered concurrently.

Specific details on our facilitators and the activities will be shared in the weeks leading up to Lent. Mark your calendars and plan to join us on our journey through the wilderness of Lent.

Wednesday Evening Parents in Conversation Small Group

Begins January 11. Wednesdays, 5:15-6:00 p.m. (Room 229)

Facilitated by Amy Passey.

This will be an informal time for parents to connect with and get to know one another as we wonder together about the ups and downs of parenting. We intend for this to be a safe space for parents to feel supported as we share our respective experiences of parenting.

Wednesday Evening Women's Bible Study

Begins January 11. 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 January, we'll begin a study of *Numbers: Learning Contentment in a Culture of More*, by Melissa Spoelstra. You can order the participant workbook here: <https://a.co/d/9rtt4tE>

Something in us aches for more—more hope, more joy, more freedom. All around us people are dancing to the steps of bigger, better, and faster, and we can easily join in without even realizing it. Before long, complaining and comparing accompany our desire for more, yet we're not any closer to filling the ache inside. God offers us another way.

In this study of the Book of Numbers, we'll find a group of people that wandered in the desert for forty years, unable to enter the Promised Land because of their complaining, grumbling, and lack of faith. The New Testament tells us that their story was written to warn us (1 Corinthians 10:6) so that we would not make the same mistakes and suffer the same consequences. God sent his only Son to die to buy our freedom from the sin that leads to discontentment, and we find our own promised land of peace and contentment in the life he gives us.

By exploring Numbers we can come to identify the reasons for our complaining, learn contentment while being authentic about the difficulties of life, accept short-term hardship in light of the greater good of God's ultimate deliverance, recognize the relationship between complaining and worry, and discover how to realign with God's character and promises.

Together we will learn contentment as we discover more of our incredible God who truly is more than enough. Only God can fill that ache inside and help us focus on his provision and purpose in the midst of life's joys and pains.

Wednesday Evening Men's Bible Study

Begins January 11, 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 and is an open-ended discussion. Devout and skeptics alike are welcome to join. Please email the Rev. John Burruss at john@ssechurch.org for more information.

Wednesday Evening *Being With* Cohort

Begins January 11. Meets Wednesdays, 5:15-6:45 p.m. (Library)

Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges and Rae Trimmier, email becky@ssechurch.org

This theological reflection group requires a 10-week commitment and pre-registration to participate. Please talk with Becky+ (becky@ssechurch.org) to learn more and to discern whether this group would be a good fit for you. The *Being With* course was developed by Rev. Dr. Sam Wells and Rev. Sally Hitchiner of St. Martin-in-the-Fields in London. The course is based around two principles. Both are convictions about God (theology) that translate into principles about our action (ethics). The first is about Jesus, the second about the Holy Spirit.

The first principle is that there is complete continuity between the face of Christ we have seen on the cross on Good Friday and the face of Christ we will see on the throne on the last day. That means we trust that, in Christ, we have been shown the whole character of God: there's nothing left to see we haven't already seen; there'll be no shocks when time ends, and God is all in all. But more significantly for this course, the way God is with us in Christ is the way God will be with us forever. What this means for the course is that Christianity is not a message or a set of convictions detachable from the shape of Jesus' life or the way the gospel is communicated; Christianity precisely *is* a form of relationship – with God, ourselves, one another and the creation – and an introduction to the faith needs to embody what that relationship looks and feels like. Thus everything that takes place on the course should be crafted to be an experience of relationship and an experience of the kingdom of God. Participants shouldn't think at the end of the course, 'Ok, I quite enjoyed that. Now I should go and find out what Christianity and the church are really like.' Instead they should look back on the ten weeks together and realise – 'That was Christianity. That was church. That was what it means to be with God and one another.'

The second principle of the course is that the Holy Spirit has been at work in the lives of each of the participants since those lives began. The Holy Spirit is constantly seeking to be in relationship with each one of us. We can look back and say, 'The Holy Spirit was with me, urging, discouraging, inspiring, redirecting, lamenting, restoring, every step of the way, even though now I realise how much I was trying to push that relationship away.' The Holy Spirit names the ways God makes Christ present in the mundane seasons and extraordinary moments of our lives. The purpose of this course is to enable participants not only to discern the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives to this point, but to begin to articulate the effect of that presence, and thus be more confident in using the language of faith and making it their own. The course seeks to enable people to become used to discerning the ways God works, and how that translates into the role of God's hand in their life – past, present and future. It's not so much, 'I want to be a Christian so God can start to work in me.' It's more, 'I realise now how much I've resisted the Holy Spirit's work in the world and in my life to this point, and I now want to be a willing partner in everything the Holy Spirit is bringing about.' (Excerpted from *Being With: A Course Exploring Christian Faith and Life*, Samuel Wells and Sally Hitchiner, Canterbury Press, 2022.)

Thursday Afternoon Bible Study: Wisdom Literature

Begins January 5. Meets Thursdays, 1:00-2:15 p.m. on Zoom.

Facilitated by the Rev. Katherine Harper.

Beginning January 5, this group will meet on Thursdays from 1:00-2:15 p.m. via Zoom. Please contact the Rev. Katherine Harper (katherine@ssechurch.org) for the Zoom link.

We will be studying Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Join us as we wander through these ancient writings, wrestle with questions faith, pray for one another, and listen for how God is calling us today.

Thursday Evening Education for Ministry (EfM)

Begins January 5. 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 email the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges at becky@ssechurch.org

Thinking and Theology on Thursdays

Begins January 12. Meets Thursdays, 7:00-8:00 p.m. on Zoom.

Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges, email becky@ssechurch.org

Each month, people with an interest in theology will gather via Zoom to discuss a variety of books and articles by theologians and other religious scholars of the present or the recent past.

Following is our tentative reading schedule for the spring semester. If you would like to receive updates about each month's readings and schedule, please email becky@ssechurch.org

January 12, 19, 26: *Jesus and the Disinherited* by Howard Thurman

February 2, 9, 16, 23: *Humbler Faith, Bigger God: Finding a Story to Live By* by Samuel Wells

March 2, 16, 23, 30: *Hannah's Child: A Theologian's Memoir* by Stanley Hauerwas

April 13, 20, 27: *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making* by Makoto Fujimura

May 4, 11, 18, 25: *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel* by Kate Bowler

Friday Morning Paul's Letters Bible Study: 1 & 2 Corinthians

Begins on January 13. Meets Fridays, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on Zoom.

For Zoom link, email becky@ssechurch.org or see the weekly e-news.

Facilitated by the Rev. Dr. Rebecca Bridges.

Continuing our in-depth study of the Apostle Paul's letters, we will continue working our way through 1 Corinthians and will begin studying 2 Corinthians later this spring. 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.

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

The women of Saint Stephen's come together in fellowship and prayer throughout the year. ALL women of Saint Stephen's are members of ECW. Each winter, the ECW hosts a women's retreat at Camp McDowell. The ECW exists to help other women find our place, ministry, wholeness in our lives, ways to serve, and become the person Christ created us to be.

Our Mission Statement: We are Episcopal Church Women, committed to one another and called to be a witness for Christ. Our challenge is to provide a safe place where every woman is free to become the person Christ created her to be.

We gather several times a year for special events, including the annual ECW Tea, to build upon the Body of Christ of Saint Stephen's. To get connected with ECW, contact Christina McGovern.

Men of Saint Stephen's (MoSS)

The Men of Saint Stephen's come together for fellowship and prayer throughout the year. They have a men's retreat each year at Camp McDowell, help with community service projects and grounds maintenance days, cook breakfast for the parish on several occasions (including Shrove Tuesday), organize a team for the annual Episcopal Place Gumbo Gala, and share many other opportunities throughout the year to learn and grow together.

All men are welcome. Watch for upcoming opportunities in the e-news, or email the Rev. John Burruss (john@ssechurch.org) to get connected with this group.