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Discernment Prayer

Almighty God, Giver of every good gift; guide this congregation in its search for a priest for St. Stephen's. Give us wisdom to work together effectively to represent the needs of our parish. Let the thoughts of many be expressed through our actions; and when we seem to stray from our purpose, right our path by enlightening us with your Holy Spirit. Grant us your favor in this vast undertaking so that when we have concluded this process, we will know that we have done what you would have us to do. All this we ask for the sake of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.



Discernment Committee Members

Joyce Small, Chairperson

Cassandra Coleman

Sandra Garner

Michael Walker

Bennie Wooten

Joyce Haines, Consultant

Vestry

The Vestry currently consists of seven elected members that serve a three-year term. Three members rotate off the Vestry each year and are replaced by three newly elected members. The election takes place during the annual church meeting. The Pastoral Care Ministry is a major focus of the Vestry. Each Vestry member receives a call log and are encouraged to reach out to members. Any urgent needs or concerns expressed are reported to the Senior Warden and the Rector.

The Vestry held a retreat earlier this year to focus our activities for the remainder of the interim time and selected these priorities: more involvement with the community, more focus on youth, and helping the congregation learn better how to receive people. We are doing these through producing and distributing church brochures, engaging children and youth more in Sunday worship, and by having completed our study of the book *Radical Welcome*.

Vestry Members

Charles Palmer, Senior Warden

Jacqueline Bonilla

R.J. Bragg

Clifton Dickens

Donna Lee

Robin Magee

Aleisha Manson



St. Stephen's Mission Statement

To meet the spiritual needs of the church and community.

St. Stephen's Vision Statement

We strive to become valued servants to a diverse community by keeping our community connected through service and commitment.

Church Staff

The Reverend William L. Queen, Jr., Interim Rector

Cecil T. Jones, Minister of Music

Robin A. Magee, Administrative Assistant

Welcome to St. Stephen's Church!

Are you discerning a new call in your ministry to become involved in God's important work in the community of Petersburg and in Southern Virginia? I welcome you to this prayerful process and encourage you to learn more about who we are at St. Stephen's. You will discover that we are fellow children of God working together in a multiracial parish, seeking to know God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit more and more, and seeking to share God's love more and more with those around us.

This is an exciting time to be with the people of St. Stephen's. I came as Interim Rector in July 2021. During this intentional interim time the parish has not been in a waiting mode. We have used formation time every Sunday for learning about Episcopal distinctiveness, held seven interim-topic workshops for self-evaluation, studied Stephanie Speller's book Radical Welcome to become better at incorporating our neighbors, and held group formation meetings to restart ministries and committees that had been put on hold during Covid. The Vestry held a retreat to review our findings from these sessions and to focus the remainder of our interim work together. We continue to work, as individuals, as groups, and as a parish, to further our faith formation, parish engagement, and service to our community. We are staying active and involved, working and worshiping, as God's faithful people.

Look at our worship opportunities, every Sunday and Wednesday, services focused on children and youth, and celebrations of Black Saints. Look at our service to our neighbors, distributing food bags and preparing lunches at the ecumenical Hope Center. Look at our fellowship events throughout the year when we celebrate and share together. Look and pray to see if God has something in store for your future here at St. Stephen's Church, with people who are committed to supporting each other, and our neighbors, as we walk our journeys of faith together.

May God's love, joy, and peace be with you as you discern with us,

Biu Queen

The Rev. Bill Queen, Interim Rector

St. Stephen's History

General History

The Origins of St. Stephen's Episcopal Church 1867 - 2022

We at St. Stephens are proud of our heritage and of being the oldest continuous Black Episcopal congregation in Virginia. As we await God's deliverance of our new rector to expound our church's rich history, we reflect on the past 155 years.

The origins of St. Stephens began two years after the end of the Civil War. It was Caroline Wiley Bragg who played a pivotal role in the founding of St. Stephens church. There were two main Episcopal churches in Petersburg at that time. They were St. Paul's Church (founded 1643) and Grace Church (founded 1841). In association with various agencies set up by the national Episcopal church; three laymen (Alexander W. Weddell and Robert A.



Gibson, of Grace Church and Major Giles B. Cooke of St. Paul's Church, who had been officers in the Confederate Army and would later become priests), began working with Caroline Bragg and the rector of Grace Church.

Mrs. Bragg led the effort to establish a Black congregation to be named St. Stephen's. With Dr. Churchill Gibson as

priest-in-charge, the small congregation got its start. The first site was the Stringfellow Chapel (so named in memory of an early rector of St. Paul's Church) in Poplar Lawn Park on Sycamore Street. This chapel had been used as a hospital during the siege of Petersburg. With funds raised by the congregation, donors from the Freedman's Bureau, northern missionary teachers, the Episcopal Freedman's Commission and other friends in the community, the chapel was remodeled for use as the initial site for St. Stephen's Church.

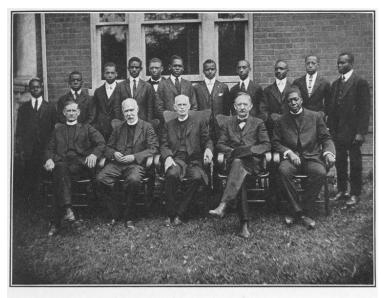
In April of 1867, a fire broke out in the newly formed St. Stephen's Church, destroying the building. This led to the building of a new church on Perry Street, which was consecrated in 1868 and led by Joseph S. Atwell, its first rector. Atwell served the church on Perry Street

from 1868 to 1873 and was the first Black ordained priest in Virginia. When the Reverend Atwell was called to serve a church in Georgia, Cooke was brought in as the next rector and remained until 1885. He consolidated the parochial school at St. Stephen's with the large day school he had been conducting on Harrison Street. The church provided an excellent education for approximately 700 pupils.

James Solomon Russell (along with several other young men who wanted to study for the priesthood) studied under a special "branch" set up in 1878 at St. Stephen's to train Black seminarians. This theological department of St. Stephen's School became chartered as a separate institution in 1884, known as Bishop Payne Divinity School. The Reverend James Solomon Russell went on to found St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, Virginia.

The Bishop Payne Divinity School (the only Black seminary in the Episcopal denomination) remained in existence until 1949, training more than 200 Black priests. With the diminished need for separate seminaries, the only Black seminary in the Episcopal denomination, the Bishop Payne Divinity School went out of existence.

The present edifice was constructed and consecrated during the ministry of the Reverend Emmett E. Miller (1907 - 1936), with our present building on



STUDENTS AND FACULTY, BISHOP PAYNE DIVINITY SCHOOL 1921

Halifax Street dedicated in 1918. Succeeding priests have propelled St. Stephen's forward in striving to carry out its mission of spiritual guidance and community service.

Youth activities at St. Stephens have traditionally come from a variety of established organizations. From 1950 – 1970, groups such as (but not limited to) the Boy and Girl Scouts of America, Episcopal Youth Community (EYC), Camp Chanco as well as other conferences and workshops provided meaningful experiences for youth. Today, the church remains active and progressive with the addition of new ministries.

In 1977, the sanctuary was remodeled and adjoining lots were purchased. Repairs and improvements were made to the external structure and in 1991, Phase I was completed with the erection of the new parish hall. Phase II of the planned improvements to the interior and exterior of the church are ongoing.

Bishop Payne Divinity School

"The Bishop Payne Divinity School began here in 1878 at the St. Stephen's Episcopal Church Normal and Industrial School. For 71 years it prepared Black men for the ministry in the church. Giles B. Cook (1838–1937) headed the vocational school and helped develop the divinity school. In 1884 the school was named after the Rt. Rev. John Payne, the first bishop of Liberia. Prominent students included James Solomon Russell (1857–1935), who founded Saint Paul's College in Lawrenceville, and George Freeman Bragg, J. (1853–1940), who became a priest and civil rights advocate. In 1949 the school merged with the Virginia Theological



Seminary in Alexandria." Source: Bishop Payne Divinity School Historical Marker (hmdb.org)





On Saturday March 29, 2014 St Stephen's Episcopal Church commemorated the achievements of the Bishop Payne Divinity School with the unveiling of a historical marker. As part of the dedication

and unveiling a service of Morning Prayer was held inside the church. Over 150 people attended the service. Family members of some of the graduates were present. Also in attendance were national, state and local officials.

Past Priests-in-Charge and Rectors

H. Roy Thompson 1977 - 1983

Jerome Burns 1986 - 1993

John Harmon 1993 - 2000

lames D. Smith 2003 - 2010

Willis R. Foster, Sr. 2010 - 2020

St. Stephen's Work in the Diocese and the Petersburg Community

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church is a small and healthy congregation that is held together by fidelity and faith. The church family welcomes, receives and cares for all people, whether they are St. Stephen's members, regular worshipers, or reside in one of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Since 1867, St. Stephen's has been an essential part of the Petersburg community by providing a meeting place in addition to being a place of worship. Its doors remain open to community groups and offers a safe facility for meetings, training, education and developing future leaders and good citizens.

In 1976, the city's 'Walk Against Hunger', was initiated by a St. Stephen's member, bringing awareness to the area's vulnerable residents, as well as a vehicle to identify and address the racial division within the city. The walk, sponsored by Downtown Churches United, benefits the Hope Center where another St. Stephen's member's determination to assist the less fortunate earned them the dedication of the site's dining hall. Both endeavors are still fully supported by the congregation.

Over the past eight years several major renovations were funded by the members and completed including new heating and air conditioning systems, improved signage, and a new roof to provide a warm and safe environment for worship and community events.

In addition to the congregation, more than 400 individuals receive some type of service or benefit from St. Stephen's presence in the community. Non-profit organizations such as Pretty Purposed, that mentors young girls between the ages of 12 and 16, The Virginia State University Sci-Tastic (Science is Fantastic!) summer camp for kids between the ages of 6 and 11 years old, Greek service/social organizations, The Retired Teachers of Petersburg & Dinwiddie, The Petersburg division of the Virginia Department of Health, and other organizations use our facilities. For a number of years, St. Stephen's served as a feeding station for the homeless and others in need.

We also host diocesan training sessions and ecumenical events as part of our service to the community of faith.

Parish Organizations

Acolytes

Our Acolytes are not only servers, torchbearers, and lighters of candles but also crucifers, thurifers, and banner-bearers. At St. Stephen's, they may serve as Lay Readers as well. The acolytes at St. Stephen's are directed by an acolyte master.



Altar Guild

The Altar Guild prepares the altar in observation of the liturgical calendar and for any special services while maintaining the altar linens and vestments, elements and brass and silver service ware.

Bereavement Committee

The Bereavement Committee was re-organized by the Vestry in 2018 to provide a courtesy repast when a church member dies and the funeral or memorial service is held at St. Stephen's. The Committee is manned by at least one volunteer form both the Men's Club and the ECW.



Christian Formation

Over the years St Stephen's Episcopal Church has offered education in many forms: Sunday school or "formation" for adults, offered between our 8:00 and 10:30 Sunday services, led by our Priest, a mid-week Bible Study Group led by lay members or by our priest, Lenten studies with an occasional guest scholar, and workshops and conferences offered by the Diocese. A Confirmation class in Spring

2022 prepared two youth and one adult for confirmation and one adult for reaffirmation of baptismal vows.

Community Outreach Food Distribution Programs

Hope Center Lunches

St. Stephen's is a member of Downtown Churches United. At least three to four times a year, a committee of volunteers serves lunch to the citizens of Petersburg at the Downtown Churches United / Hope Center (a union of area faith communities, organizations and other charitable partners committed to filling the essential needs of Greater Petersburg's financially distressed citizens). Upwards of 100 meals are served each day.



<u>Kids Summer Food Program</u>

Food insecurity has risen dramatically, and our young ones are most vulnerable when schools are closed and children may not receive breakfast or lunch.

In 2017, St. Stephen's and Community in Schools of Petersburg joined with Chesterfield Food Bank and started a Kids Summer Food Program to provide these food items children may otherwise go without.

We also delivered food to neighborhoods, individual families in need, Downtown

Churches United, and those who lacked transportation to come to us.

On any given week, we would serve at least 200 to 300 kids weekly, thus, distributing 400 to 600 bags of food weekly. During COVID, we served our youth from June to the end of the year.

Pantry Bag Distribution

This ministry has grown from a monthly, one-meal brown bag lunch to a small grocery bag of canned goods provided by members of our congregation. Our outreach has been to residents in the surrounding Church community who are hungry. In March of 2020, in partnership with The Chesterfield Food Bank, we've expanded this important ministry. providing Emergency Food Bags containing non-perishables breakfast and lunch / dinner meals. Due to Diocesan COVID protocols, this ministry was suspended in January 2022.



Tri-Cities Work Camp

For every work day during a week in the Summer, a team from St. Stephen's provides lunch to a team of five to seven kids from the Tri-Cities Workcamps at their work site.

This group of young people spend that week rebuilding homes, constructing porches, wheelchair ramps and painting for families in need. Tri-Cities Workcamps, Inc. is a non-profit interdenominational organization established in 1987 by Rev. John & Connie Romaine. This ministry was suspended due to the pandemic.

Daughters of the King

The St. Stephen's chapter of the Daughters of the King was installed in 1987. To fulfill their commitment of prayer, service and personal evangelism, the Daughters engaged in numerous activities including visiting the sick and home-bound. This chapter of the DOK was re-installed in 2019 but is temporarily suspended due to the pandemic.

Episcopal Church Women (ECW)

The Episcopal Church Women (ECW) is a vibrant organization with membership open to all women of St. Stephen's. ECW traditional annual activities are: Jewels Celebration/Family Day Dinner, Parish Outreach, Recognition of Graduates, Seder, United Thank Offering, Women's Day, and Yard Sales We participate in the Convocation VI ECW and the Diocesan ECW. We are focused on activities to nurture the spiritual life of the parish, support organizations of the Diocese, and uplift the community. We collaborate with the Men's Club on numerous endeavors. The pandemic over the last two years has curtailed some of our activities, but most have continued under compliance with Diocesan COVID-19 guidelines.

Greeters

Members of the congregation are assigned to serve as greeters. The purpose of a greeter is to welcome visitors as they enter the sanctuary and to assist with their participation in the service. Greeters may also present the elements and collection plates.

Jewels of St. Stephen's

The Jewels' ministry was initiated under the direction of Father John T. W. Harmon with the first ceremony taking place in 1996. The organization was established to honor members of

St. Stephen's who reached the age of 80+ recognize their dedicated service, guidance and support of St. Stephen's and the community. In 2011, Father Willis R. Foster enhanced the program by adding "A Blessing of the Elders" as part of the ceremony.

At the first celebration, 32 Jewels were celebrated. Annually since that time, the St. Stephen's family celebrates our Blessed asset combined with the Family Dinner that allows the congregation to celebrate Thanksgiving as a church family.

Lectors / Lay Readers

St. Stephen's Lay Readers / Lectors are members of the congregation called upon to read lessons, psalms and prayers for services. If trained, they may also fulfill the duties of an Acolyte or Lay Eucharistic Minister.

J.B. Patterson / Ransom Men's Club

J.B. Patterson was the first Black agricultural extension supervisor in the state of Virginia. Mr. Patterson was a strong Episcopalian who quickly became a faithful parishioner at St. Stephen's. In 2015 following the death of faithful member James Ransom, the organization was renamed the J.B. Patterson / Ransom Men's Club.

The Men's Club was organized to promote fellowship, foster spiritual growth and to contribute to the financial well-being of the parish.

Although they collaborate on many projects with the ECW, the Men's Club specific activities include Mother's Day celebration, Annual Church Picnic, Jazz Concert Night, Men's Day Service, Pancake Supper on Shrove Tuesday and Easter Sunday Fellowship.



Music Ministry

The traditional Anglican psalms and canticles and selected African American songs enhance the deeply spiritual tone of worship with music from the 1982 Episcopal Hymnal and the 1993 Lift Every Voice and Sing African American Hymnal. Prior to the pandemic St Stephen's engaged the music students at Virginia State University as choir Interns.

Worship

Holy Eucharist Rite II is celebrated every Sunday at 10:30 a.m. When needed, there is now a licensed lay worship leader and preacher to officiate. Once a month the sermon focuses on the celebration of a saint. More high-church elements are being reintroduced into worship; sanctus bells, chanting, and holy water available weekly, and incense and altar bells for holy days. The summer season's worship has made use of supplemental liturgical materials. Once a quarter the worship focuses on children and youth, with young people doing all of the readings and assisting in other ways. A children's homily is the only sermon on those days. Midweek Bible Study takes place within the context of Noonday Worship, every Wednesday, via Zoom.

Pastoral Care

The ministry of caring is at the heart of the church's life and extends beyond the St. Stephen's family to the surrounding community. The Rector and members of the parish visit the sick and shut in. When asked, the Rector administers the sacraments to hospitalized and home-bound members. The Third Sunday of every month during the 10:30 service, we recognize milestones in parishioners' and visitors' lives such as birthdays

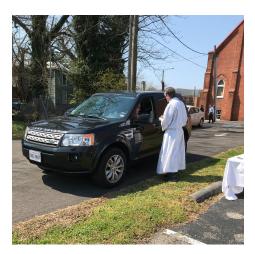


and anniversaries. The Interim Rector will be preparing a group of trained Lay Caregivers this fall.

Virginia State University

Among St. Stephen's parishioners are several current and former faculty and staff members. Discussions have begun with the United Methodist Campus Minister at VSU, and diocesan staff, exploring ways that the parish can reinvigorate our outreach to the campus. Discussions are also underway about returning to the practice of having music students involved in our Sunday worship.

Covid-19 Response



All parish activities were held by Zoom-only starting mid-March 2020 and continued through June 2021. The Diocese offered CDC recommended guidelines and eventually a return to in-person service without Zoom offerings began in April of 2022. Safety protocols are being gradually relaxed: masks are now optional, we are singing full hymns, and we are using individual, disposable Communion cups. Sunday formation has been held weekly, in-person and on Zoom. Seating is safely distributed throughout our sanctuary and parish hall. Wednesday Bible Study and Noonday worship continue to be Zoom-only.

Our Financial Outlook

St. Stephen's Capital Campaign 2017 – 2019

In 2017 St. Stephen's initiated a capital campaign to fund needed repairs and to ensure that certain features of the original building would be preserved. Major concerns were the preservation of the stained-glass windows in the sanctuary, preservation of the historic design of the ground floor windows and restoration of the Gothic Louver. Other repairs and improvements included resurfacing the parking lot and replacing the fencing bordering the parking lot.

The Cameron and Titmus Foundations were significant contributors to the campaign. The Cameron Foundation is known for its commitment to restoring historic buildings in the local area. The total funds raised from the capital campaign were \$236,861.

The Capital Campaign Fund has a balance of \$48,000 that will be applied to restoration projects that have not been completed.









Financials for the Past Three Years

St. Stephen's Revenues and Expenses 2019 – 2021

		2019	2020	2021
Revenues				
	Operating Revenues	\$160,392	\$167,903	\$173,492
	Non-Operating Revenues	\$10,237	\$4,112	\$27,721
Total		\$170,629	\$172,015	\$201,213
Expenses				
	Operating Expenses	\$169,615	\$157,890	\$135,436
	Non-Operating Expenses	\$69,180	\$0	\$6,858
Total		\$238,795	\$157,890	\$156,834
Year End Totals				
	Total Cash	\$199,618	\$244,753	\$216,531
	Total Investment Value	\$510,012	\$477,098	\$603,838

The Petersburg, Virginia Community

Highlights and Attractions

Petersburg is an independent city in the Commonwealth of Virginia. As of the 2020 census, the population was 33,458. The Bureau of Economic Analysis combines Petersburg with Dinwiddie County for statistical purposes. The city is 21 miles south of the capital city of Richmond.

Pick from urban and rural settings, as well as several selections that present the beauty of natural living with the conveniences and a centralized location. Our area features a number of architectural styles ranging from the historic 1800s to modern constructions. Petersburg is an area rich in history. Home to several historical sites including The Exchange Building, Blandford Church and Cemetery, South Side Depot, Historic Battersea, Petersburg National Battlefield, and the Centre Hill Mansion, Petersburg has a deep connection to American history. President Abraham Lincoln visited and spoke in Petersburg on three separate occasions during the Civil War. Reverend Martin L. King, Jr. stayed at a local home the many times he traveled through Petersburg in the 1950's and '60's. There are several other historical sites involving racial equality in Petersburg, including Trailways Bus Station, a listed stop during the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947, and the Freedom Rides of 1961 and Pocahontas Island, the oldest free Black settlement in the nation.

Petersburg City Public Schools continue to strive for the complete development of all students. We are home to an energized and community-driven school district, supported by local businesses, civic groups, and some of the most established churches in the United States.

The Diocese of Southern Virginia

http://www.diosova.org/

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Petersburg, is part of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia, which is headquartered in Newport News, Virginia. The diocese is home to 107 Episcopal congregations spanning over 200 miles from the Virginia/ Maryland border on the Eastern Shore, west to Danville and Chatham, and northwest to the portion of the Richmond metropolitan area located on the south side of the James River. Altogether, about 30,000 persons worship in the diocese.

The Episcopal Church in Southern Virginia is a diverse Eucharistic community, committed to the Gospel, collaborating for strength, innovating for growth, equipping each other to live in the world as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Diocese of Southern Virginia is one of three Episcopal dioceses in the commonwealth formed from a portion of the Diocese of Virginia in 1892. The diocese has roots in the earliest decades of American history, going back four centuries to the English settlement of Jamestown.

As we celebrate our rich past, the diocese continually looks forward. Under the leadership of the Rt. Rev. Susan Haynes, the diocese strives to be innovative, pursuing a bold vision for the future. We hope that you will consider being a part of bringing forth this vision!

Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia 11832 Rock Landing Drive, Suite 100 Newport News, VA 23606-4231

Critical Abilities for the Future Rector

Preaching - Capacity to inspire and connect people to God's work

Teaching / training – Capacity to deepen understanding, form character, and equip members with new skills

Pastoral care – Capacity to engage people empathetically and care for persons in times of need

Community catalyst – Capacity to function on a larger scale beyond the church and to rally a variety of individuals and groups to address critical issues

Negotiate / resolve conflict – Capacity to help a church deal with conflict through training, negotiation, and mediation

Strategic leadership – Capacity to cast a vision and lead the church toward realization of the vision

Change management – Capacity to lead a church through a significant and necessary period of change

Administration – Capacity to manage a church operationally including facilities, finances, and staff

The priest we are seeking should have an appreciation for the heritage of this historically Black church while helping us learn to adjust to modern realities. They should be excited by the opportunity for sharing in ministries with four nearby Episcopal parishes.

Executive Survey Summary

Congregation Assessment Tool (CAT) June 2022

The CAT was recently administered in St. Stephen's Episcopal Church during May and June 2022. Eighty-eight persons were invited to participate; of these forty-six persons responded.

Overall, approximately 22% of our members are clearly satisfied with things in the church. This, along with other information, indicates that our members can imagine a church with a higher level of vitality than they are currently experiencing and are searching for a pathway that will lead them to a stronger church.

As members look to the future, our top four priorities are:

- 1. Make necessary changes to attract families with children and youth to our churches.
- 2. Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reach new people and incorporate them into the life of the church.
- 3. Provide more opportunities for Christian education and spiritual formation at every age and stage of life.
- 4. Strengthen the process by which members are called and equipped for ministry and leadership.

Three priorities that are unusually strong for our church as compared to other churches are:

- 1. Strengthen the pastoral response of the church in serving people in times of need (emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, etc.)
- 2. Strengthen the management and support of persons in various ministries so that they are able to do what they do best in work that is meaningful and celebrated.
- 3. Enhance or improve the physical facilities of the church to expand or enhance our ministries.

The survey data should be the beginning of a conversation and not the end.



This icon of St. Stephen, was gifted by The Right Reverend Barbara C. Harris in 2007 during one of our 140th Anniversary observances.

