



**SAINT STEPHEN'S**  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

# **Adult Learning Program Guide: Fall 2021 Classes and Groups**

For more information or to talk with someone about finding the best fit for your interests and gifts, please contact Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) or Becky Watts ([becky@ssechurch.org](mailto:becky@ssechurch.org)).  
You may also contact the specific leaders listed for each of our small groups.

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# Sunday Morning Forums

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

*For all adults of the parish, we host speakers and discussions on a range of topics and subjects that will enhance our spiritual life and sense of purpose and community. A link to each week's forum can be found in our weekly e-newsletter, and [past forums are archived on our YouTube channel](#). Speaker biographies and instructions on how to connect with us on Sunday mornings may be found on our formation page, <http://www.ssechurch.org/formation>*

## **September 12: Shaking the Gates of Hell: A Search for Family and Truth in the Wake of the Civil Rights Revolution**

John Archibald, Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist for *The Birmingham News*

## **September 19: Recovery Sunday Panel Discussion**

Pam Moore, Steve Moore, Kaye Adams, Squire Gwin

## **September 26: Echoes of Eden: Earth and Heaven Touch in a Garden**

Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University

## **October 3: Restoring the Garden: Creation Care in Israel's Legal System**

Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University

## **October 10: The Garden of God: Beautiful but Broken**

Jeff Leonard, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University

## **October 17: Learning from Creation in the Book of Job**

Will Kynes, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies, Samford University

## **October 24: Topic TBA**

The Reverend Rebecca Bridges Watts, Ph.D., Associate Rector for Formation and Outreach

## **October 31: Consecration Sunday (no Sunday Forum)**

## **November 7: Topic TBA**

The Reverend Katherine Harper, Associate Rector for Pastoral Care and Liturgy

## **November 14: Annual Meeting (no Sunday Forum)**

## **November 21: Spirituality of Food**

Gisela Kreglinger, Ph.D.

## **November 28: Advent Festival (no Sunday Forum)**

## **December 5: The Jericho Project**

Stephen Bush, former Public Defender, Shelby County, Tennessee

## **December 12: Topic TBA**

The Reverend John Burruss, Rector

## **Inquirers' Class: A Class on the Episcopal Way of Faith**

Sunday mornings, 10:15 a.m.-11:00 a.m., in Room 228 and on Zoom  
September 19 – November 7 (We will not meet on October 3 or 31.)

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 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 17 at 6:30 p.m. (or at a later date).

[Click here to register.](#)

## **Online Daily Reflections and Morning Prayer Services**

**Daily Reflections:** Mondays through Saturdays, Saint Stephen’s clergy write original theological reflections in response to the scripture readings appointed for each day. These reflections, ranging from 500-750 words in length, 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 self-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, this prayer service includes space for community members to greet one another and share prayer requests in the comments.

## **Paul’s Letters Bible Study with Becky Watts+**

Mondays, time TBD, Zoom or Library

Class meeting time to be determined. Click on the link below to share your time preferences.  
[Click here to sign up for our Bible study email list](#) (to receive Zoom link and class updates).

Continuing our in-depth study of the epistles written by the Apostle Paul, this fall we will begin to work through his Letter to the Romans. Each Monday, we will work through one chapter together. Since there are 16 chapters in Romans, we should be able to make our way through Romans by the end of this fall. 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.

Contact Becky Watts to confirm whether we are meeting in person or on Zoom (this may change from month to month). Meeting format depends on emerging public health conditions.

## Tuesday Morning Men's Bible Study

7:00-8:00 am, Room 228 and 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 Larry Kiker or Amy Passey ([amy@sschurch.org](mailto:amy@sschurch.org)) for a Zoom link.

## Tuesdays at Lunch—Rector's Reading Group

All classes will be offered on Zoom on Tuesdays from 12:10-12:50. The class may choose to meet in person with a hybrid option at some point in the fall. [Click here to register.](#)

### September 7, 14, 21, 28: *Faith after Doubt* by Brian McLaren

“In a culture in which the self-appointed gatekeepers of Christianity insist that faith equals certainty; belief is adherence to an exacting checklist of principles and politics; and belonging is an insular, exclusive membership, Brian McLaren is a heroic gate-crasher. In *Faith After Doubt*, he invites us into an honest, vital conversation about the pain and shame created by inherited certainty, and the powerful usefulness of thought and doubt. For all those who have understood that doubt and free thinking are failings of your faith, Brian's book will help you live fuller and breathe easier. He illuminates the reality that belief and doubt are not opposites, they are the twin sisters with whom any honest person of faith walks continuously.” —Glennon Doyle

### October 5, 12, 19, 26: *Return of the Prodigal Son* by Henri Nouwen

*The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* is a spiritual adventure story. A chance encounter with a poster depicting a detail of Rembrandt's *The Return of the Prodigal Son* set in motion a chain of events that enabled Nouwen to redefine and claim his vocation late in his life. In this book, which interweaves elements of art history, memoir, Midrash, and self-help, Nouwen brings the parable to life with empathic analyses of each character. Nouwen's absorption in the story (and the painting) is so complete that the father's challenge to love the son, and the son's challenge to receive that love, become Nouwen's own. And Nouwen's writing is so clear and his tone is so appealingly frank and humble that readers—no matter how far from home—will find hope for themselves in the prodigal peace Nouwen ultimately achieves.” —Michael Joseph Gross

### November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30: *Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*

From the publisher: From African American to Asian American, indigenous to immigrant, “multiracial” to “mixed blood,” the diversity of cultures in this world is matched only by the diversity of stories explaining our cultural origins: stories of creation and destruction, displacement and heartbreak, hope and mystery.

With writing from Jamaica Kincaid on the fallacies of national myths, Yusef Komunyakaa connecting the toxic legacy of his hometown, Bogalusa, LA, to a blind faith in capitalism, and bell hooks relating the quashing of multiculturalism to the destruction of nature that is considered “unpredictable” — amongst more than 35 other examinations of the relationship between culture

and nature — this collection points toward the trouble of ignoring our cultural heritage, but also reveals how opening our eyes and our minds might provide a more livable future. *The Colors of Nature* comes in four alternating-color covers: red, yellow, green, and blue.

**December 7, 14, 21: *The Book of Forgiving* by Desmond Tutu and Mpho Tutu**

From the book: How do I forgive? Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu has witnessed some of the worst crimes people can inflict on others. So, wherever he goes, he inevitably gets asked this question. This book is his answer. Writing with his daughter, Mpho, an Anglican priest, they lay out the simple but profound truths about the significance of forgiveness, how it works, why everyone needs to know how to grant it and receive it, and why granting forgiveness is the greatest gift we can give to ourselves when we have been wronged.

They explain the four-step process of forgiveness—Telling the Story, Naming the Hurt, Granting Forgiveness, and Renewing or Releasing the Relationship—as well as offer meditations, exercises, and prayers to guide the reader along the way. “With each act of forgiveness, whether small or great, we move toward wholeness,” they write. “Forgiveness is how we bring peace to ourselves and our world.”

**Tuesday Night Book Discussion Group with Becky Watts+**

6:00-7:30 p.m., Zoom or Terrace Room

[Click here to register for our book group email list](#) (to get Zoom link and updates).

This group will meet on the first and last Tuesday evenings of the month from 6:00-7:30 p.m. We will introduce each book on the first Tuesday of the month, discussing background on the author and giving an overview of the book. Participants will then read the book at their own pace throughout the month before we gather for an in-depth discussion of the book on the last Tuesday of the month, giving everyone a few weeks to read and reflect on the whole book.

Contact Becky Watts to confirm whether we are meeting in person or on Zoom (this may change from month to month). Meeting format depends on emerging public health conditions.

**September 7 & 28: Becca Ehrlich, *Christian Minimalism: Simple Steps for Abundant Living* (Morehouse, 2021)**

Learn more about the author here: <https://christianminimalism.com/my-story/>

Logically, we all know our purpose in life is not wrapped up in accumulating possessions, wealth, power, and prestige—Jesus is very clear about that—but society tells us otherwise. *Christian Minimalism* attempts to cut through our assumptions and society’s lies about what life should look like and invites readers into a life that Jesus calls us to live: one lived intentionally, free of physical, spiritual, and emotional clutter.

Written by a woman who simplified her own life and practices these principles daily, this book gives readers a fresh perspective on how to live out God’s grace for us in new and exciting ways and live out our faith in a way that is deeply satisfying.

**October 5 & 26: John Archibald, *Shaking the Gates of Hell: A Search for Family and Truth in the Wake of the Civil Rights Revolution* (Knopf, 2021)**

Learn more about the author here: <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/john-archibald-alabama-media-group> and <https://www.al.com/staff/jaarchib/posts.html>

Archibald's memoir focuses on growing up in the American South of the 1960s—an all-American white boy—son of a long line of Methodist preachers, in the midst of the civil rights revolution, and discovering the culpability of silence within the church. By the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and columnist for *The Birmingham News*. “My dad was a Methodist preacher and his dad was a Methodist preacher,” writes John Archibald. “It goes all the way back on both sides of my family. When I am at my best, I think it comes from that sermon place.” Everything Archibald knows and believes about life is “refracted through the stained glass of the Southern church. It had everything to do with people. And fairness. And compassion.” In *Shaking the Gates of Hell*, Archibald asks: Can a good person remain silent in the face of discrimination and horror, and still be a good person?

**November 2 & 30: Kate Bowler, *No Cure for Being Human (and Other Truths I Need to Hear)* (Random House, 2021)** Learn more about the author here: <https://katebowler.com/>

Kate Bowler believed that life was a series of unlimited choices, until she discovered, at age 35, that her body was wracked with cancer. In *No Cure for Being Human*, she searches for a way forward as she mines the wisdom (and absurdity) of today's “best life now” advice industry, which insists on exhausting positivity and on trying to convince us that we can out-eat, out-learn, and out-perform our humanness. We are, she finds, as fragile as the day we were born. With dry wit and unflinching honesty, Kate Bowler grapples with her diagnosis, her ambition, and her faith as she tries to come to terms with her limitations in a culture that says anything is possible. She finds that we need one another if we're going to tell the truth: Life is beautiful and terrible, full of hope and despair and everything in between—and there's no cure for being human.

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

9:30-11:00 a.m. (Room 228 and Zoom)

Facilitated by Virginia Hillhouse

This fall we will begin a study of 1 Kings and 2 Kings. Come see what you think. Please contact Virginia Hillhouse or Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) for the Zoom Link.

## **Wednesday Morning Centering Prayer**

Wednesdays, 10:00-11:15 a.m. (Chapel or Zoom)

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. On all other Wednesdays, we meet in the Chapel at Saint Stephen's. To learn more, contact Louise Meredith.

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

5:30-6:20 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 or Scripture is necessary. Childcare is available.

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

5:30-6:20 p.m. (228)

Facilitated by the Rev. John Burruss

Gather for conversation and an informal discussion of the Scriptures for the upcoming Sunday, led by our rector, John Burruss. Childcare is available.

## **Wednesday Night Live**

5:30-6:45 p.m., begins September 8

We gather for children's and youth programs and adult small groups from 5:30-6:20, then close with a brief service of Compline (with folk music from *Alleluia III*) from 6:30-6:45 in the Nave. About once a month we will have intergenerational programs for all ages, and the other weeks we will have separate groups for adults, youth, and children.

Due to emerging public health considerations, we will not be gathering for dinner together in the Parish Hall. Instead, we will offer take-away dinners, which may be ordered in advance and can be picked up anytime between 5:00-6:30 from the elevator porte cochere entrance.

### Revised Wednesday Night Live Schedule for Fall 2021

5:00-6:30	Dinner pickup (elevator lobby/porte cochere)
5:00-8:00	Nursery
5:30-6:20	Women's Bible study group (Terrace Room)
	Men's Bible study group (228)
	Children's and Children's Music combined program (Carpenter Hall)
	Club 56 (Carpenter Hall)
	Episcopal Youth Community (Parish Hall, outdoor spaces, and Carpenter Hall)
	Folk Band practice (Chapel)
	Casual Conversations with Clergy (Garden Courtyard; rain location, Library)
6:30-6:45	Compline (livestreamed from the Nave, with Alleluia III music by folk band)
7:15-8:30	Adult Choir practice (Nave)
7:00-8:00	Young Adults small group (228/Zoom)

### Wednesday Night Live Intergenerational Events for Fall 2021

(Other special events may be added to the schedule—see e-news and bulletin for details.)

September 29	Blessing of the Solar Panels by Bishop G (outdoors)
October 27	Trunk or Treat



## **Wednesday Evening Young Adults Small Group**

7:00-8:00 p.m. /Room 228 and Zoom

Facilitated by the Rev. John Burruss

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.

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

Led by Frank Holmes, EfM Mentor. For more information: Becky Watts ([becky@ssechurch.org](mailto:becky@ssechurch.org)).

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.

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.

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.

EfM groups meet regionally in nearly every diocese of The Episcopal Church, in six provinces of the Anglican Communion, and some in virtual classrooms with participants from across the globe. We would love to have you join us!

## **Friday Morning Bible Study with Katherine Harper+**

10:30-11:45 a.m. (Zoom)

This class may choose to add an in-person component at some point during the fall. Beginning September 10, this group will meet on Fridays from 10:30-11:45 a.m. via Zoom. We will begin a study of the General Epistles, books of the New Testament written to general or broad audiences in the early days of the Christian church. We will do an in-depth reading of James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Jude. Nestled between Hebrews and the Revelation to John, these writings give us glimpses of the concepts and concerns of early believers in Jesus. Join us as we wander through these ancient writings and listen for how God is calling us today. Please contact the Rev. Katherine Harper ([katherine@ssechurch.org](mailto:katherine@ssechurch.org)) or Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) for the Zoom link.



## **Boomers**

Boomers is a group of adults, age 55 and older, who get together monthly for fellowship and fun. We have social hours, occasional guest speakers, day trips, movie days, and much more! If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) or Van Chaplin.

## **Middlers**

The Middlers are adults, thirty-something to fifty-something, who meet monthly at one another's homes and at fun locations around Birmingham. We are single, married, partnered, with children and without. Want to join us? Watch for announcements of our gatherings on our Facebook group and in the e-news. To get connected with this group, contact Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)).

## **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 year, the ECW hosts a women's retreat at Camp McDowell. The ECW exists to help other women find our place, our ministry, to find wholeness in our lives, to find ways to serve, and to become the person Christ created us to be. Our Mission Statement is: 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 to build upon the Body of Christ of Saint Stephen's. To get connected with ECW, contact Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) or 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 once or twice a year at Camp McDowell, help with community service projects and grounds maintenance days, cook breakfast for the parish on several occasions, and have 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 John Burruss ([john@ssechurch.org](mailto:john@ssechurch.org)) or Amy Passey ([amy@ssechurch.org](mailto:amy@ssechurch.org)) to get connected with this group.