

Parish Profile

Communicants in Good Standing

60

Average Sunday Attendance

40-45+

Liturgical Style and Practice

We typically have one service on Sunday morning, which starts at 9:00 AM. The service fits what is referred to as the “Broad Church” worship style with Holy Eucharist celebrated every Sunday. The service typically follows Rite II in the Book of Common Prayer. We typically sing hymns from the Hymnal 1982. We also have copies of *Lift Every Voice and Sing (LEVAS)*, and we will sometimes use a hymn from *LEVAS* in our Sunday service. We offer other services such as Celtic Services, monthly Healing Services, Lessons and Carols, Christmas Eve Service, and services celebrating the Holy Week of Easter including Tenebrae and Stations of the Cross. St. Stephen’s has a full set of new vestments and altar hangings in the appropriate colors for each season of the church year.

Strengths

St. Stephen’s is a warm, vibrant, energetic community that delights in providing an all-inclusive, welcoming atmosphere for spiritual growth. We are financially stable, and though small in number, we reflect a strong spiritual presence for outreach and philanthropy in our community.

Our greatest strength is our people. The community of St. Stephen’s consists of highly educated and professionally accomplished individuals with 88% of the congregation, who responded to the Parish Profile survey, holding a college degree. 60% of those respondents have a graduate degree as their highest degree and 28% of respondents have a bachelor’s degree as their highest degree. Most congregants are 55 years old or older.

When asked “What keeps you coming back to St. Stephen’s?” the response was overwhelmingly the people.

- “The people foremost, their spiritual outlook and beliefs, but most importantly the fact that we are an all-inclusive church and accept all of God’s children regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or political views.”
- “I feel at home there - through tough times and good times. I love the energy, the sense of community. The value of acceptance for all is very important to me, and the intellectual as well as spiritual energy of the congregation and the dedication to service.”
- “The welcoming and intellectual members of St. Stephen’s attracted us.”
- “The people are friendly, and I love how such a small congregation can do so much! The fund-raising events are amazing.”

- “Fellowship, spiritual leadership and philanthropy - the act of giving back to the community through generosity, whether through time, talent or money! The love of humanity.”
- “Lay people are actively involved. Worship is very meaningful. Coffee hour. It's just the right place to be.”

In the past, St. Stephen's commitment to diversity and inclusion faced a serious challenge that split the church. Despite the difficulties faced, the core congregation remained faithful to these values, and, as a church, we have moved past this experience to become an even more accepting community. We accomplished this by holding strongly onto our Christian values and concentrating on rebuilding our church into a loving and vibrant community.

Another major strength of St. Stephen's is our outreach programs and philanthropic commitments to our community. St. Stephen's mission includes donating 20% of our annual income to philanthropic outreach.

To raise money for our outreach ministries, as well as continue to kindle the fellowship of our congregation, St. Stephen's holds two major fundraisers every year. Our largest event is the Strawberry Festival held in May on the beautiful grounds of St. Stephen's, Heathsville. This event is the largest event in the Northern Neck of Virginia, and it is often voted by the community as one of the best events in Eastern Virginia each year. This year's Strawberry Festival netted \$22,000 for our different ministries. Another fundraising event is the Oysters and Oldies Festival held in December on an historic farm just down the street from the church. This event sells out each year and this year netted \$17,000.

St. Stephen's Thrift Store, located on our grounds, is another opportunity for outreach in our community. This is one of the most popular thrift stores in the region offering low cost, good quality items. In fact, medical equipment that is donated to the Thrift Store, is given to people in need free of charge. We also give the Red Cross vouchers at no cost to provide clothing and household items to disaster victims. The Thrift Store's annual net revenue is approximately \$80,000.

And finally, our Parish Hall, built in 2000, serves as a community hub and meeting space for many organizations in the community. Currently, there are approximately 20 organizations who use our Parish Hall for meetings and gatherings. This includes organizations such as the American Red Cross Blood Drive, various garden clubs, the Northern Neck Bar Association, and Scout Troop 250, just to name a few.

Challenges

Like many churches, one of our biggest challenges is attracting new members. We have steadily increased our membership in the last several years. However, our desire to continue to grow, increase diversity, and become an even more vibrant part of our community can be challenging within the constraints of a limited demographic.

We have many outreach programs such as our festivals and the Thrift Store. We would like to continue these outreach programs but also consider new programs that serve and interact with the community.

Another concern is our music program. Because most of our congregants are retired, they often travel or spend time at a second home. It is hard to form a dedicated choir when some members are away for varying periods at a time.

Skills and Characteristics Preferred in the Next Priest-in-Charge

We are looking for a Priest-in-Charge who:

- Is an engaging leader who will walk with us as we grow spiritually.
- Will take on a leading role in our church and the community at large and help us grow.
- Will take a lead in outreach and look for opportunities that need addressing in the community.
- Engages in compassionate pastoral care, including visiting the sick.
- Is an active participant in every aspect of our church life and ministry.
- Can help to build the talents of the congregation so that each individual becomes a better person in Christ.

About St. Stephen's, Heathsville

St. Stephen's, Heathsville is located in Northumberland County, Virginia. Northumberland County is located in the historic Northern Neck of Virginia which is bordered by the Potomac River, the Rappahannock River, and the Chesapeake Bay. The original parish, named Chickacone Parish, was formed in 1653. St. Stephen's Parish was formed from this original parish in 1698. Our current church building was built in 1874. Recently the building has been refurbished and the lighting has been updated. This past year, we built a Memorial Garden on the church grounds as a quiet place for personal reflection and contemplation and as a place to bury the cremated remains of our loved ones.

This region offers a number of activities such as historical and heritage sites, parks, nature and water trails, wineries, and boating as well as many museums dedicated to the history and culture of our region. The region in which we live is a popular retirement destination attracting people from both Richmond, VA and Washington, DC.

Comments

In developing this Parish Profile, the Discernment Committee sent out a survey to the congregation, receiving a 50% response rate. Many comments have been shared throughout this profile. Here are a few additional comments about St. Stephen's, Heathsville:

- "A growing community of faithful servants who continue to make our priority bettering the lives of those in our extended community."
- "A place where people are energized and can feel the presence of God in worship, work, and fellowship."
- "A place of solace, comfort, education, and a Christ centered space for us to grow up and grow old in."
- "A place of vibrant worship and music programs."