

A Letter from the Rector

August 23, 2017

*Introducing St. Stephen's Episcobasics*

Have you ever wondered about why we do something in the church but never found a good place or time to ask about it? I certainly have!

If there is one thing you've probably learned about me by now, it's that I'm an avid learner. There are few things I enjoy quite as much as a good opportunity to learn something new and grow together as the children of God, becoming the people God calls us to be.

You probably also know that I am a big fan of inclusiveness. As a rule, I try to always keep an eye out for how we, as a community, can make sure that all our members and visitors, families and friends, old and young, newcomers and longtime participants, feel included in what we do together.

The theologian and author John Westerhoff was Professor of Theology and Christian Nature at Duke Divinity School when we explained that, as church families, we grow more in attendance, more in engagement, and yes even more in faithfulness when we feel like we are learning at our church. He also taught that we grow even more in our attendance, even more in our engagement, and especially more in our faithfulness when we feel like we are learning with one another and everyone feels included in learning as a community.

It is with those two values in mind that I introduce to you all something new starting up this fall between the 8:00am and 10:00am services on Sunday mornings: *St. Stephen's Episcobasics*.

Are you curious about why some people do the sign of the cross at certain times and not others? Or why some people kneel or stand at different times in the worship services?

Want to know about how The Episcopal Church is similar and different from other church denominations? Or why different churches do baptisms differently and read different Bible translations?

*Episcobasics* will be a friendly and open gathering to ask those questions you have always had or be surprised by things you never knew, covering topics each week like where The Episcopal Church came from, personal prayer, the evolution of the Book of Common Prayer, the sacraments, and more! Following John Westerhoff's model of encouraging inclusion and learning together, *Episcobasics* will be a wonderful time for us to gather and learn with each other. If you are new to The Episcopal Church or new to St. Stephen's, it will be a great way for you to get to know us. If you are a lifelong Episcopalian or even a lifelong member of St. Stephen's, I guarantee you will learn a lot too! And because *Episcobasics* will include youth and adults of all ages, people seeking baptism and confirmation, and just people who like to spend time together learning, we will all be fellow children of God, growing together as a community of faith.

I am very excited to be starting *St. Stephen's Episcobasics* with you all soon! Please keep an eye out for announcements to come about the exact starting dates and times. Thank you and God bless!

Yours in Christ,

Steven