



Better *Together*



Fall 2026

gfbccary.org



Fall at Greenwood Forest

We are all longing for community. Technology, work schedules, and other social pressures have been pushing us apart for years, but we know that we are better together. We're reorienting community life at Greenwood Forest to provide more space for connection, lower barriers of entry, and easier pathways to community.

Sunday Schedule:

9:45 - Choir Rehearsal
10:00 - Sanctuary Opens
10:15 - Worship Begins
11:15 - Community Hour
12:00 - Dismissal of Kids

Practically, that means we're swapping the order we do things. We'll now begin our time together on Sunday in worship, grounding our gathering in community, ritual, and belonging. Afterward, we'll gather in smaller communities according to interests, small groups, and special opportunities. Each week, we'll have a chalkboard with a menu of options for community life at Greenwood Forest that week.

Our faith formation small groups (including children and youth) will meet during this time on a regular basis. Churchwide faith formation and other community events will happen here, as well.

We're so happy to welcome you to worship and community life at Greenwood Forest in this new rhythm!

Community Hour

Community Hour is a time for our usual groups to meet as well as for special opportunities. Some weeks will be for the whole church to gather together and regular groups will not meet. Other weeks will have additional offerings taking place alongside regular groups.

September

September 6 | We'll kick off the year with a **church potluck** during Community Hour! Bring your favorite dish to share as we begin a new church year together.

September 13-27 | For the rest of the month, Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks will lead us in a churchwide Faith Formation series on Zach Lambert's book, ***Better Ways to Read the Bible: Transforming a Weapon of Harm into a Tool of Healing***. We'll gather all the adult small groups together to examine the harmful ways the Bible has been used and how we can put our sacred texts to the work of healing and restoration in our community instead.



October

October 4 | We'll have a **Church Business Meeting and Potluck** to both join in fellowship and make important community-wide decisions. Bring your favorite hearty dish to welcome the fall.

Special offerings that will be a part of Community Hour going forward will begin in October, as well. These will happen in parallel with normal small groups and classes.

October 11 | We'll host the first **Sermon Series Talkback** where you can come enjoy a small group with Rev. Lauren Hayes to talk about recent sermon topics in more depth.



October

October 18 | Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome will lead a **community organizing training** for those interested in getting involved in making change through local politics and government.



October 25 | Evan Owoc-Edwards will lead the first Greenwood Forest **Jam Session**. Come join him in the Sanctuary with whatever instrument you play to explore new musical expressions for worship.



November

November 1 | **GFBC 101** is a time for new (and new-ish!) folks to come learn about the values, history, and practices of Greenwood Forest's community.

November 8 | We'll have another **Sermon Series Talkback**.

November 15 | We'll have our second **Jam Session** in the Sanctuary. Bring your instruments!

November 22 | As we approach the Advent and Christmas seasons, we have some decorating to do! Join us for a **Souper Love Feast** potluck where we all bring a soup to share and fellowship over special treats. Afterward, we'll **decorate the church** with holiday garlands, trees, and lights!



November 29 | Our first **Family Circle** gathering will be a time for caregivers of kids and youth to talk about the struggles, joys, and other issues of parenting. Get connected with other families!



December

December 6-13 | Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks will lead us in a churchwide Faith Formation series on **Images of the Divine Feminine** from the personified Wisdom of Sophia to Jesus's maternal images for God.

December 20 | We'll have **Christmas Brunch** together for a time of fun and fellowship. Bring your favorite brunch-y foods and we'll enjoy our community's biggest annual potluck!

December 27 | After the holiday busy-ness, we'll take some time to just sit with each other and enjoy a nice cup of coffee or hot cocoa during **Christmas Coffee Hour**. Normal Community Hour programs (including for kids and youth) are replaced with a time of unstructured fellowship and community.

Music at Greenwood Forest

If you're interested in singing in the **Sanctuary Choir**, come to the weekly rehearsals on **Wednesday nights at 7pm!** The music ministry would love to welcome you. For other types of music consider attending one of the **Jam Sessions** in the Sanctuary or keep an eye out for rehearsal announcements for **handbells** and other temporary ensembles.



Small Groups

In addition to the special offerings during Community Hour, we also have regular small groups meeting at that time for faith formation. There's a place for everyone!

Agape: The Agape class is a Gen-X and Millennial mix of folks who welcome deconstructing our faith in order to strengthen it. Agape is a discussion heavy class and we welcome new ideas that challenge our faith and help it grow. Facilitated by Lynn McLaughlin (mclaughlynn@yahoo.com).

Crossroads: The Crossroads faith formation class is a good fit for those at a crossroads in life; whether it's becoming empty nesters, retirement, or any move to the next stage of life. Our discussions are drawn from the sermon series or special literature as decided by the class. Facilitated by Susan Beck (carygator1@gmail.com).

Generations: The Generations class is a group of multigenerational women with both long-time and newer members who intentionally support each other and reach out to others. Typically, we study books, curriculum offered by GFBC staff, podcasts and occasionally a magazine or newspaper article. Facilitated by Vivian Denning and Sue Daniel (vivian.denning@itresourceinc.com).

JOY: The JOY Class is a longstanding class of around 6 women, all of whom are over 70. The JOY class tends to take deep dives into individual books of the Bible. Taught by Sally Shaver and coordinated by Diana Morde (dianamorde@yahoo.com).

Jubilee: Jubilee class is a "young" adults class (ages 18-40ish but no strict limits) including people who are single, married, with or without children. We typically discuss the sermon text of the week with added context related to art, current events, poetry, etc. Facilitated by Evan Owoc-Edwards (evan.edwards1210@gmail.com).



Parlor: This age-diverse small group meets weekly to explore scripture and faith-based topics in order to grow more fully and deeply as followers of Christ. The teaching format is free-flowing, as each participant facilitates the discussion by sharing their own interpretations and faith journey in relation to the topic in the reading materials. Facilitated by Diana McGahan (ddmcgahan@gmail.com) and Steve Denning (steve.denning@itresourceinc.com).

Children: On Sunday mornings, our children have two age-based rooms: the Rainbow Room (C236) and the Wonder Room (C234/5). The Rainbow Room is for our infant and preschool friends where they can play and find belonging at church. The Wonder Room is for kids in Kindergarten through Fifth Grade and is a discovery-based space where kids will read, play, learn, and craft together each week. Contact Rev. Spears-Newsome for details (wes@gfbccary.org)

Youth: Our youth (grades 6-12) meet in middle and high school groups on Sunday mornings. Additionally, our youth gather with groups from other progressive churches several times throughout the year and go on retreats, to camp, and on other trips together. Contact Rev. Spears-Newsome for more details (wes@gfbccary.org)

If you need help finding a group, consult the community chalkboard or grab a member of the ministerial staff or another church member after worship! We're all happy to help you find your place at Greenwood Forest.



Fall Sermon Series

Spiritual Practices for Troubling Times | September 6–October 18

Turmoil in our world has been relentless. There is so much injustice to fight, and sometimes we feel like we are going to crumble under the weight of it all. On top of that, in our own personal lives, we and the people we love experience pain and tumult. Engaging in spiritual practices can help us sustain ourselves—and even enliven us!—in the midst of a world that is deeply troubled. In this series, we will explore practices of sabbath, silence, play, being in nature, beauty, and care.

Resistance 500 | October 25–November 22

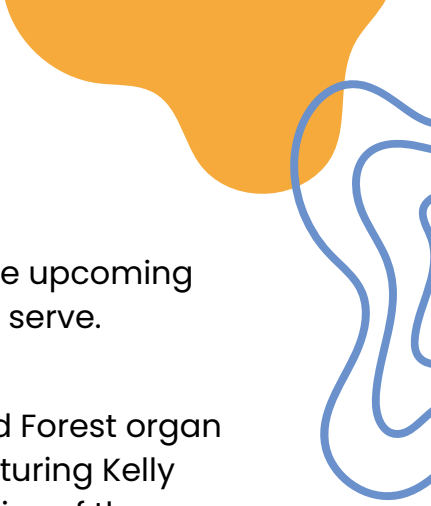
As our nation celebrates its 250th year, it does so without reckoning with the truth of our origin story. Our nation was created by settlers, colonizers, and slaveholders and has continued to claim that we are the home of the free, while denying freedom for all. This year is also the 500th anniversary of the first rebellion of colonized people against imperial powers on what would become known as American soil. This is where the real American revolution began, and it has been going on, in maroon swamps, slave quarters, Indigenous councils, Black churches and Pentecostal storefronts for five hundred years without stopping. By hearing from those ancestors who were courageous enough to rebel, we can gain courage and creativity to resist so all people can experience liberative justice.



Until the Dawn | November 29–January 3

As we retell the story of God coming in our midst, we long for God to be born again as wars rage, violence persists, and new tragedies unfold. How do we carry on the work that is ours to do as we struggle under the weight of our world? We know things are not as they should be. This series focuses on how we take action as we move through the night with hope that a new day is dawning.

Special Services



Deacon Ordination | September 6 | Regular Worship

We recognize the new leadership of our church for the upcoming church year, celebrating their gifts and willingness to serve.

Organ Dedication Service | October 1 | 7pm

At long last we formally dedicate the new Greenwood Forest organ in a special service with unique musical offerings featuring Kelly Grooms and Travis Whaley, highlighting the capabilities of the new instrument.

All Saints Sunday | November 1 | Regular Worship

As part of worship, we remember those who have died in the hope of the resurrection since last All Saints Sunday.

Reign of Christ | November 22 | Regular Worship

We celebrate the coming of God to overturn injustice and welcome us into divine love and peace. We also decorate for Advent and Christmas during Community Hour.

Service of Lament | December 16 | 6pm

The holidays can be difficult when you're experiencing grief. Whatever loss you are experiencing, whether it was recent or long ago, join us to comfort each other.

Lessons and Carols | December 20 | Regular Worship

We cover the entire biblical story and sing classic Christmas songs and hymns during this special, traditional service. Not only is it a high point of our music ministry calendar each year, it's also followed by Christmas Brunch!

Christmas Eve | December 24 | 11am & 8pm

We offer a Children's Christmas Eve service at 11am that involves constructing a Nativity together. The traditional Candlelight Service is at 8pm.



Book Club

Over the summer, we started the Greenwood Forest book club with Sue Monk Kidd's *The Book of Longings*. Due to popular demand, we'll be doing three more books this fall!

September: *Kin* by Tayari Jones

Kin is a novel about mothers and daughters, friendship and sisterhood, and the complexities of being a woman in the South, exploring how race, class, and geography intersect with our individual stories.

Genre: Contemporary Fiction

Facilitator: Rev. Lauren Hayes

Meeting Time: September 27, 5:30–7:30pm



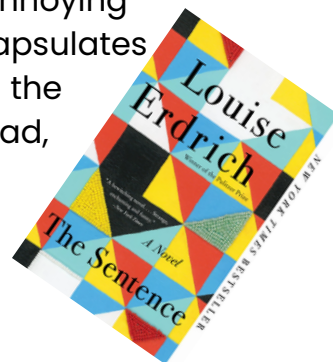
October: *The Sentence* by Louise Erdrich

A small independent bookstore in Minneapolis is haunted from November 2019 to November 2020 by the store's most annoying customer. The journey between All Souls' Days that encapsulates the beginning of covid, the murder of George Floyd, and the 2020 election asks what we owe to the living and the dead, but also to the reader and the book.

Genre: Speculative Fiction

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

Meeting Time: TBD



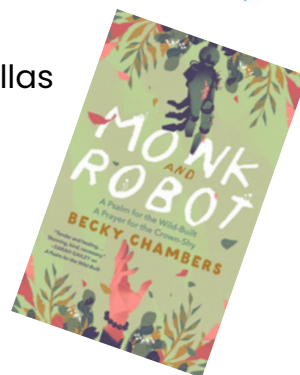
November: *Monk and Robot* by Becky Chambers

Monk and Robot is a collected duology of the novellas *A Psalm for the Wild-Built* and *A Prayer for the Crown-Shy*, both of which focus on themes of vocation, productivity, and worth.

Genre: Cozy Sci-Fi

Facilitator: Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Meeting Time: TBD



Mission Partnerships

Greenwood Forest is committed to our work in the community beyond our walls. We're connected with a number of different organizations mostly focused on food and housing. Contact Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome (wes@gfbccary.org) for more information about opportunities.



Backpack Buddies

We have partnerships with two local elementary schools to make sure no kids go home on the weekends without food on the table. You can pack bags, grocery shop, or deliver food to schools in this ministry.



Family Promise

Family Promise of the Triangle provides temporary housing for families with children experiencing homelessness. You can cook meals and grocery shop for these families multiple times per year.



The Caring Place

We host The Caring Place in our building every week where they provide guidance and learning for families in their program, which provides temporary housing for working families with children experiencing homelessness.



ONE Wake

Greenwood Forest helped found this broad-based, inter-racial, inter-religious organization of almost 50 congregations and institutions in Wake County to make change in Wake County. We push our elected leaders to prioritize housing, health, transit, and more.





gfbccary.org

Rev. Lauren Hayes

Senior Pastor | lauren@gfbccary.org

Rev. Wesley Spears-Newsome

Associate Pastor | wes@gfbccary.org

Rev. Dr. Stephen Stacks

Director of Liturgy and Formation | stephen@gfbccary.org

Alex Filby

Director of Facilities and Administration | alex@gfbccary.org

Helen Bishop

Organist and Interim Choir Director