Welcome to the St. Stephen’s and St. Agnes Creation Trail, our way of noticing and giving thanks for the wonderful gifts God has given us on our green and growing campus. As you follow the trail through these 14 stops (or any portion of the trail), may you walk with God.

The trail begins on the side of MacKinnon Hall (see the trail map on the next page marked with the start and all the stops).

**Stop 1: The Outdoor Classroom.** In the midst of nature, we reflect on our place in God’s creation. Our outdoor classroom has two parts: the first is here, where students of all ages can “dig in” to many ways of learning, creating and discovering. The second is down the hill in the woods where any class can sit to enjoy the silence and the sounds of the created world (this stop may be locked on weekends).

*Dear God, thank you for the Earth: for grass, trees, and logs; for birds, bugs, and bushes; for fresh air, clouds, and the gift of rest.* (written by Junior Kindergarten)

**Stop 2: The Kinder Garden.** This garden, just outside our kindergarten classrooms, contains plants native to Virginia. Constantly changing, it is a place where we can get acquainted with the cycle of life.

*Thank you, God, for beautiful flowers, for the soil, the light, and the rain that make plants grow. Help us to grow in hope, peace, and love.* (Written by Kindergartners)

**Stop 3: The Turf Field.** Make your way to the Turf Field by climbing the short flight of stairs to your left and greet St. Francis of Assisi, lover of creation, as you pass his statue. Next you’ll see the Turf Field, which represents our protection of nature. It is made from recycled tires, keeping them out of landfills and giving us a safe, green surface where we can let our imaginations run. This site is also a gathering place for welcomes and celebrations.

*Thank you, God, for a place to play soccer, football, Sharks & Minnows, and many more games. Thank you for open space to turn cartwheels, and for the trees and nature all around the field. Thank you for this place where we can be together.* (written by Second Graders)

**Stop 4: Protection of Soil.** These tiered stairs, while fun to climb and play on, also serve an important purpose. They prevent the soil from washing away when it rains and remind us that our lives depend on the good earth.

*Thank you, God, for the gift of soil, which grows our food and supports the trees. Thank you for the leaves that we can play in. Thank you for worms, who renew the soil. Thank you for the beauty of the whole world. How kind and generous you have been to us!* (Written by First Graders)

**IDEAS FOR USING THIS TRAIL**

To walk the trail, pausing to read descriptions and pray, takes about 40 minutes. You may choose to walk the whole trail, visit any stop at any time, or walk just one “loop” of the figure-eight design.

With your smartphone you can scan the QR codes on each stop to read about the stop, read a text of the prayer, or hear students read the prayer.

Another approach is to think about the days of creation described in the book of Genesis. This poetic way of understanding the creation of the world is a beautiful celebration of God’s gifts. (See back page.)
Stop 5: The Old Oak. Among the oldest trees on the Lower School campus, the old oak has been here as long as the school and will likely stand for many more years. It reminds us that in a changing world, we are also given shelter and stability.

Thank you, God, for this tree, which stands here by your grace. Thank you for the many seasons it has witnessed and the generations of children who have enjoyed its shade. As it has survived through sunshine, storm, and blizzard, this tree reminds us that you are with us in all the seasons of our lives.

(Written by Fifth Graders)

Stop 6: Lloyd House. The oldest building at the center of campus reminds us of the people who came before us—our history. Built around 1870 by Richard Lloyd, the house that once overlooked an agricultural landscape became St. Agnes Episcopal School in 1924. Today, it preserves not only our past but our future: many SSAS families begin their journey here, with a visit to the Admission Office.

Thank you, God, for this house that represents the many people who built our school and handed on the tradition of excellence in education. We thank you for leaders, teachers, families, and alumni—a beloved community of Saints! (Written by Faculty)

Stop 7: The Flag Pole. Here, under the flags of the United States and the Episcopal Church, we remember that God freely created us and gave us the gift of freedom. With freedom comes responsibility to make wise decisions and to seek liberty and justice for all God’s children.

Thank you, God, for the gift of freedom, which lets us enjoy all the other gifts you have given us. We are grateful especially for the freedom to worship you in the way that is right for each of us. Help us to make good choices and to work so that people everywhere may be free from hunger, illness, and oppression. (Written by Fifth Graders)

Stop 8: Community Overview. As we look through the trees to the community that surrounds us, we recall that we are part of a neighborhood, a city, a nation, and a world. We welcome the neighbors who enjoy walking their dogs or riding their bikes through our beautiful campus!

Thank you, God, for giving us a good community—for the neighbors we can see and for those far away. We are glad we can share this heavenly place. Help us to have compassion for neighbors in need. Thank you for our families, friends, and the people we love.

(Written by Fourth Graders)

Stop 9: Bluebird Boxes. Eastern bluebirds, native to Virginia, were declining in numbers until people began building nesting boxes for them. They are popular because of the male’s bright blue color and the display of affection between pairs. Five bluebird boxes line the fence along the McBride field.

Thank you, God, for bluebirds and all the birds of the air. We pray that they will be safe and enjoy these homes. Thank you for all the wildlife that may visit these woods: for squirrels and snakes, foxes and hawks, robins and eagles. We praise you for all living things and pray that we may protect them.

(Written by Third Graders)

Stop 10: Macan Field and Playground. Outdoor play is a vital part of each school day—both organized games in PE and free play at recess. Fresh air, exercise, and social time help our students stay healthy and well-balanced.

Thank you, God, for fun! We give thanks for the natural playing field, for green space, mud, and a place to run. We give thanks also for our play equipment, both the materials and the people who made it. Thank you for our healthy bodies and for time to play with our friends.

(Written by Third Graders)

Stop 11: Water Protection. All of life depends on water, and we are blessed with clean, safe water for drinking, washing, and cooking. These drain stickers, placed by our Girl Scouts, remind us to take care that nothing harmful goes down these drains. Water that enters these drains flows into Timber Branch, then into the Potomac River and the Chesapeake Bay.

Thank you, God, for water that helps us survive and keeps us clean. Thank you for fish and all creatures that swim, and for the fun of swimming ourselves! Thank you for oceans, rivers, and streams, and for the rain that waters our crops. Help us do our part to protect the precious gift of water.

(Written by Second Graders)

Stop 12: The Sundial. Before clocks were invented, people told time by the shadow cast on a sundial. At this stop we give thanks for all the ways God gives us to order our days.

Stop 13: Spring Flowers. Before clocks were invented, people told time by the shadow cast on a sundial. At this stop we give thanks for all the ways God gives us to order our days.

Stop 14: Raised Beds. Before clocks were invented, people told time by the shadow cast on a sundial. At this stop we give thanks for all the ways God gives us to order our days.
Thank you, God, for the gift of light: for the sun that warms our earth and provides our food, and for the moon, stars, and planets that brighten the sky. We give thanks for the gift of time, for days, months, seasons, and years. Thank you also for shadows, and for keeping us near you in darkness and in light.

(Written by First Graders)

Stop 13: Spring Flowers. As winter moves into spring, this is where we see the first green shoots rising from the earth. For a few weeks every year, this stop bursts with color. But even when it looks as if there is nothing here, we can pause and remember the new life underground, just waiting to be born.

Thank you, God, for the blessing of spring. When the flowers wake up after their long sleep, they make us happy. Thank you for their beautiful colors and fragrance. We thank you also for the bees that pollinate flowers and the honey they produce. Even in winter, you brighten our days with hope.

(Written by Fourth Graders)

Stop 14: Raised Beds. Here, students share the joy of planting, tending, and harvesting everything from pumpkins to squash to sunflowers. Students have also used these beds for an exciting tulip research project.

Thank you, God, for soil, rain, and sun that make our seeds grow. Thank you for pumpkins, cucumbers, tomatoes, watermelon, broccoli, and so much more. As we watch our gardens grow, help us to grow in body, mind, and spirit, and to always grow closer to you.

(Written by Kindergarteners)

Please return your map to the mailbox outside MacKinnon Hall. We hope you enjoyed your visit!

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

For an Eagle Scout project, SSSAS student Clay Kane ’13 created the trail design, researched descriptions for each stop, consulted on design of markers, and led Boy Scout Troop 1515 in substantial physical work. The Scouts renovated the outdoor classroom, placed the numbered markers, and built and erected the bluebird boxes.

The Creation Trail was launched during Earth Week 2011. Many thanks to the hands, hearts, and minds that brought it into being.

“And it was good.”

To visit Creation Trail stops in the sequence described in Genesis 1:1—2:4, use this order:

The First Day - Light: Visit the Sundial (Stop 12). And God said, ‘Let there be light;’ and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.

The Second Day - Water: Visit the drains (Stop 11) and think about how you use water each day. And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.’ So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome ... And it was so.

The Third Day - Dry Land and Vegetation: Visit the Kinder Garden (Stop 2) or the Raised Beds (Stop 14). The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good.

The Fourth Day - Sun, Moon, and Stars: Visit the turf field (Stop 3), a good place to do some cloud watching by day or stargazing by night. And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years’ ... and God saw that it was good.

The Fifth Day - Birds and Fish: Visit the Bluebird Boxes (Stop 9). And God said, ‘Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.’ ... And God saw that it was good.

The Sixth Day - Animals and Human Beings: Visit the Community Overlook (Stop 8). And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth’ ... God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. And God blessed them ... God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

The Seventh Day - Sabbath: Rest at the Outdoor Classroom (Stop 1). Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation.