



ST. STEPHEN THIS WEEK

St. Stephen Lutheran Church Newsletter

OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

Apart from baptisms, maybe nothing produces so many smiles in the sanctuary as welcoming new members. Last Sunday we welcomed seven! Below, you get a few biographical details and fun photos of five of those seven.

ELISE ELEGEERT AND SONS CALVIN AND TRUETT

Elise is an assistant professor at the FSU School of PA Practice

“We all enjoy outdoor activities and participate in Cub Scouts,” she said. “Truett plays piano and ukulele, and Calvin enjoys art and creating.”

Elise is originally from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan but has been in Tallahassee for five years. She’s “ELCA born and raised.” In previous congregations, she’s been involved in youth group, praise band, sound/technology and handbells.

What inspired her to become part of our congregation? Here’s an answer many of us can relate to: “Done procrastinating.” Elise added: “We’re excited to establish our new church home.”

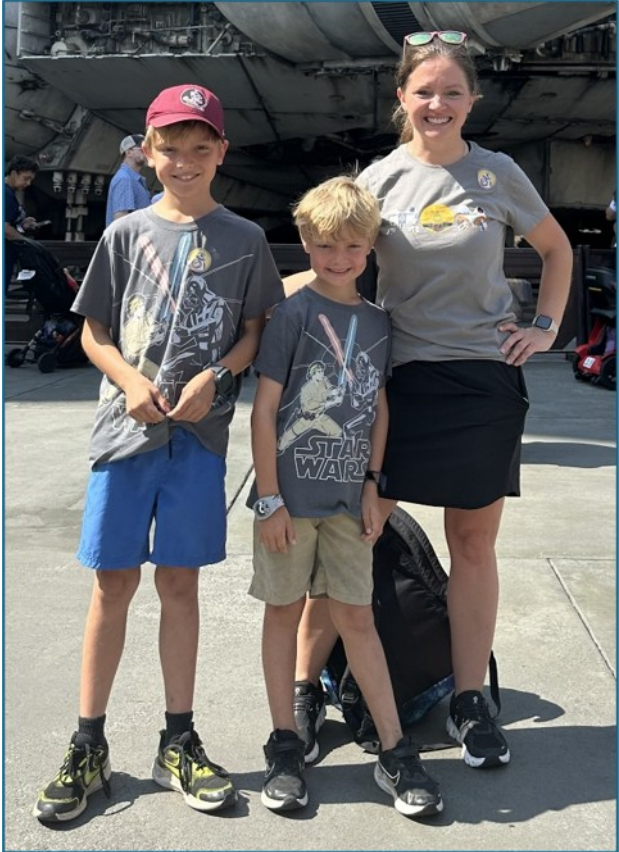
MYRNA HOOVER & BRIAN GREEN

Myrna is the retired director of the FSU Career Center and knows quite a few St. Stephen people with FSU connections. Her hobbies are running, traveling, reading and volunteering with Hospice. She was raised American Baptist (not Southern Baptist) and has been a member of a Lutheran church since 1986.

At previous Lutheran congregations, Myrna has been a Sunday School teacher, director of Christian education, secretary, Altar Guild member, reader – and has helped out with grounds support. This sentence of hers will warm your heart:

“The welcoming environment of St. Stephen and the practice of welcoming ALL people solidified my desire to become a member.”

Now, let’s talk about Brian: He’s a retired business owner who enjoys traveling, riding his Harley, playing golf, and volunteering on behalf of fellow veterans.



Brian was raised in a military family, which meant a lot of moving around. His family’s church affiliations changed with each duty station, he said, but they were primarily Lutheran.

“After many years of not attending church services, my wife reintroduced me to God and faith,” he said. “We found St. Stephen to be our home to practice our faith due to the fellowship and the welcoming atmosphere of the entire church.”

Also becoming members Sunday were Bennett and Courtney Zerbe, whom you known as Zoe’s parents. We hope to bring you their bios in the next newsletter. Welcome, all!

OUR FINANCIAL MINISTRY

Here are the official minutes from the financial discussion during Sunday’s congregational meeting.

Financial Report

a. Rudy Hehn: We are in the black, but not by much. All bills are up-to-date, but we do not have very high reserves in the event of a large emergency repair.



Questions/Concerns

- Karen Elizabeth Olson questioned: Why did we borrow funds from Justice & Mercy to pay the utility bill in February? How do we manage cash flow? Rudy answered: We don’t borrow from specific funds such as Manna; we borrow internally from Pastor’s Justice and Mercy account, and we pay it back. Furthermore, the Finance Committee did a three-year look back at expenses to ensure we are good stewards of our funds.
 - Dave Suhrweir questioned: What is the Wonderfund? Rudy answered: The available balance is over \$18,000; one of our congregation members offered to pay off Pastor Tom’s seminary student loans; Council was grateful and received the donation, but before the loan was paid, Pastor Tom qualified for the loan forgiveness program and his loans were forgiven; we named that money Wonderfund and labeled it as designated funds to be set aside; the Council and the donor would have to make a decision as to how funds are spent.
 - Mark Greeley noticed a discrepancy in the health and benefits line. Rudy said the church is now caught up on Portico health insurance and retirement; the expense is paid each month to avoid late interest fees.
- b. Property and Liability Insurance – Pastor Tom Holdcraft
- Karen Elizabeth alerted us that the policy had incorrect construction dates; correct dates are in place in the county’s system.
 - Karen Elizabeth reported seeing 3 problems:
 - Vastly underinsured for sanctuary; \$382,000 coverage;
 - This policy is a surplus policy – not regulated;
 - The insurance company has gone on record stating they don’t want to cover churches anymore.
 - Treasurer Jen Dritt commented that many churches and nonprofits are covered by surplus policies; in addition, a new estimated value of property is expected within the next year as a result of the appraisal. Thirdly, we want to be proactive in seeking an alternative insurance company for next year.

YET ANOTHER FLOWER OPTION!

Recently we told you that, on those Sundays when no one steps forward to dedicate altar flowers from a florist for \$40, Office Manager Rita is exercising her own flower-arranging skills. The question arose: Who will get to take those flowers home after the service? Answer: Whoever steps forward first with a donation of \$20.

Well, this week, when she sent in her altar-flower dedication, Marilyn Larson added this note: “Rita, you are doing such a fantastic job with



floral arrangements, if you have the time, would you do the arrangement and apply my flower donation toward the flower cost?”

What a good idea. So now, on a Sunday when you’re dedicating altar flowers, you have a choice as to whether you want to take home flowers arranged by a florist, or flowers arranged by our own Rita. I’m thinking this is a no-brainer.

Have any questions about altar flowers? Give Rita a call.

THE HUMAN JESUS: EXCERPT FROM PASTOR TOM’S SERMON

Jesus was heading away from Jerusalem and he was taking his disciples into foreign territories. Then an unnamed Canaanite woman shouted, “Have mercy on me, Lord, my daughter is tormented by a demon.” Surprisingly, Jesus ignored her shouts and pleas. Did he ignore her because she was a woman, or because she was Canaanite? Or both? Was it because she was a person who was being punished by God, for why else would her daughter have a demon unless she was being punished? That was the thinking and teaching of that era.

The truth is, we don’t know why he ignored her, and we don’t know why he eventually said the words he said [about being sent “only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”]. Some might say he did what he did to teach his disciples, and us, a lesson in mercy. Like something a good professor might do to stimulate dialogue with the students – you know, like playing devil’s advocate. But I think that might let Jesus off the hook a little too much here.

There’s discomfort in understanding Jesus’ behavior in this account because we like to consider him perfect from the get-go. Yet why not at least consider that Jesus might have thought his ministry to be first and foremost to the Israelites? They are God’s people, after all. And if that’s the way Jesus understood his purpose, then it’s not hard to fathom that Jesus may have been the one needing to learn. The one needing to learn about God’s unbounded love and broad mercy, in a new way. Like an unfinished, but still learning, person.

Could Jesus have been imperfect as he went along teaching, healing and correcting religious leaders? Are we allowed to consider such an interpretation? After all, we believe him to be human, as much as divine. So, this encounter could be a message to us of Jesus learning something very important, very new and from a least-expected person, even learning it the hard way.

COMING UP

Today:

Noon - AI-Anon meets in Pastor Emory Hingst Memorial Fellowship Hall, aka Hingst Hall (HH)

7 p.m. - AA meets in HH

This Friday:

9:30 a.m. - TOPS meets in HH

This Sunday:

9:00 a.m. - Bible study

10 a.m. - Worship, Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

Monday, August 24:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Tuesday, August 25:

6 p.m. - NA meets in HH

6 p.m. - Confirmation for adults

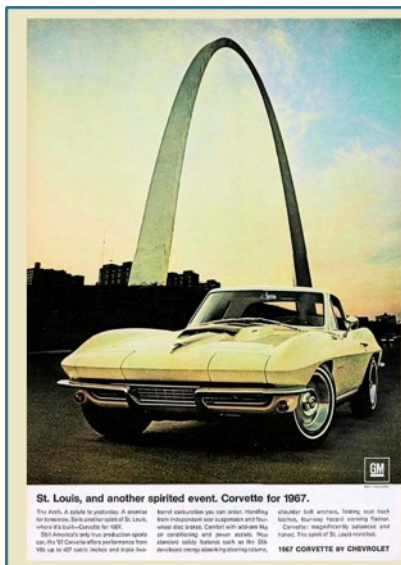
Wednesday, August 26:

5 p.m. - TIMA meets in HH

Thursday, August 27:

10 a.m. - Bible study

- During a little late-night Facebook skimming Wednesday, I laughed out loud at a post by The Babylon Bee, a satirical website. It shows a guy crashing through a church window above this fake headline: “Church Introduces Breakaway Stained Glass Windows for Introverts to Use During Sharing of the Peace.”
- The St. Stephen office has run out of Publix/Walmart/gas cards to distribute to people who come to our door for financial assistance. If you can help us stock some of these cards, they will be put to good use. Cards worth \$20-\$25 are best. Thank you for supporting this ministry!
- As Dave Suhrweir pointed out in the last newsletter, two former speakers at our Ministry of Reconciliation Sunday events were on the primary ballot this week. How did they do? Jeremy Matlow is in a runoff in the Tallahassee mayoral election, but Shevrin Jones was defeated in the race for Florida House District 24.
- Reminder: Lutheran Disaster Response shares God’s hope, healing and renewal with people whose lives have been disrupted by disasters in the U.S. and around the world. If you’re able to give, visit www.elca.org. Or call 800-638-3522.
- And pictured here is the newsletter editor’s latest suggestion, in case the Church Council votes to provide him with a company car. It’s a ’67 Corvette. As the ad proclaims, “magnificently balanced and honed.” Might I say that you, too, dear reader, are looking magnificently honed. God, watch over us as we drive through life.



Pastor Tom Holdcraft, Preaching and Presiding; **Jen Dritt**, Assisting Minister; **Rob Schiffer**, Cup Minister; **Greta Scavone**, Lector; **Karl Barton**, Cantor; **Loraine Sundberg and Ben Bush**, Tech Team; **Linda Eshleman and Barbara Sullivan**, Altar Guild; **Marilyn Larson and Janet Barber**, Counters; **Bob Eshleman and Patrick Kennell**, Ushers; **Denise Bookwalter**, Announcements.

Marilyn Larson - 8/22
Greta Scavone - 8/23
Jerry Harrison - 8/24
Andrea Notley - 8/26
Susan Warren - 8/26
Melissa Barton - 8/27
Jacob Nallapu - 8/28
Amanda Clause- 9/6
Martha Marky - 9/8
Greta Langley - 9/9
Bryon Ehlmann - 9/11



If you have news or photos to share,
please send them to Rita at
sslc@ststephenlutherantally.com.

Don't forget our Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ststephentallahassee>.

St. Stephen Lutheran Church, ELCA